



PS3
PlayStation.3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PSVITA
PlayStation Vita

PlayStation Network

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 78 FEBRUARY 2013
100% Australian Content

GORGEOUS! ▶

CRYYSIS 3

Meet the shooter that
maxes the PS3!

DEAD SEXY! ▶

DARK SOULS II

How this brutal
sequel's evolving!

HANDS ON! ▶

GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION

The new multi
torn apart!

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SUPER SEXY
SUPER SLIMS
UP FOR
GRABS!

INSANE! ▶

ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

Your face-melting
look at this bad-ass
bug hunt!

THE LAST OF US
BIOSHOCK INFINITE
METRO: LAST LIGHT
DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY
FUSE
AND MUCH,
MUCH MORE!

8-PAGE INFO EXPLOSION!

INJUSTICE GODS AMONG US

The Harlequin of Hate goes nuclear in the brawler to beat!



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PS3
PlayStation-3



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FIGURINE WITH ARTICULATING ARMS

SONY
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COVER FEATURE

A NEW AGE OF HEROES

Why it's the fighter fans will want to Flash mob

p52



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Console wars

James Cottee analyses the conflict that we never thought would wind down this soon p26.



OPINION

On Museums

Angry Sackboy doesn't know much about art – but he knows what he likes. (Not much.) p24.

ON THE COVER



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INTERVIEW



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See page 68 for details ►

Meet the team



Paul Taylor

Deputy Editor

Sleeping Dogs, Dishonored, Borderlands 2 and Far Cry 3 were my favourites this year. Roll on 2013.

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *The Last of Us*



Stephanie Goh

Art Director

Borderlands 2 DLC is magnificent. It's the first time I've bought a season pass, and I love it.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *The Last of Us*



Dan Staines

Contributor

SPOILER ALERT: The last story mission in *Far Cry 3* is utter balls. Really, really not sure why it is like it is.

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *Bioshock Infinite*



James Cottée

Contributor

Despite the countless hours I've spent playing *Borderlands 2*, I still haven't reached the level cap.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *Injustice*



James Ellis

Contributor

Honestly, my wants and actions haven't changed. My life is Zen. Which is nice.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes*



Nathan Lawrence

Contributor

You won't even get to read this because the world will have ended!

Playing: *Skymir*

Wanting: *Aliens: Colonial Marines*



Dave Kozicki

Contributor

Is it wrong that I'm only using mines, grenades, C4 and explosive tipped arrows to hunt in *Far Cry 3*?

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *DmC*



Toby McCasker

Contributor

Men with guns and grenades, whatever. Gigantic killer turkeys with karate powers = halp. Cassowaries, wtf?

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *Prey 2*



Angry Sackboy

Contributor

Seriously considering setting fire to the Internet. What do you think: would you miss it all that much?

Playing: *PS All-Stars BR*

Wanting: *MGS: GZ*

Editorial



Never judge a book by its purty pictures. It's a tired cliché which, like most phrases championing common sense, is utterly lost on your average Internet commenter. I'm hoping magazine readers still pay it heed, otherwise some of you will soon be pissed to discover we're not actually an Insane Clown Posse fanzine.

Sorry, Juggalos, there's no 10 page guide on 'how magnets and f--king rainbows work' here. (Google for

context, thank us later.)

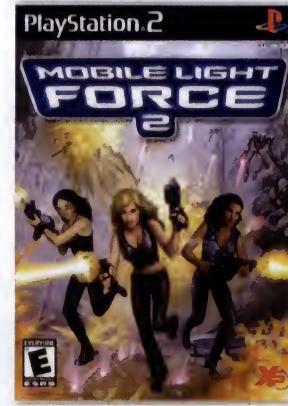
We're on this topic of covers and idiocy because the online peanut gallery has pooped its collective pants pretty hard over *BioShock Infinite*'s box art (see page 23 for a rough idea). Seems everybody with a keyboard is an art critic and a marketing expert now. How dare Irrational put the guy we'll be playing as, holding the gun he uses, against an accurate, zeppelins-exploding skyline. *What trickery is this?!*

As usual the current generation of gamers doesn't know how good they've got it. Any old-school consumer listening to the *BioShock* detractors screaming "ugmo art, totally misrepresentative of gameplay!" is laughing their arse off.

Look at the 2003 release below and try to tell me what type of game it is...

Bzzzt! **WRONG.** It's a scrolling 2D shooter like *Raiden*. It features zero conventional firearms, the protagonists always fly in the sky and not one character looks even remotely similar to these members of the Brigade Of Overly-multicultural Babes (B.O.O.B). The blurb won't help you much, either, thanks to such gems as 'Find And Destroy The Murderers', 'Take Survival Into Your Control', and 'Each Level Has A Tougher Enemy Foe'.

You've got nothing to be upset about, modern person. Your covers look like the things they look like. Please stop wasting your whinges. It's embarrassing to watch.



Adam.

Adam Mathew

Editor

Playing: *DmC*
Wanting: *The Last of Us*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins a prize! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? **Love? Wrong.** A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotches? No. **Please stop abusing our rhetorical system!**

The answer we were looking for is: an OPS subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

TURN TO PAGE 68

PlayStation

Official Magazine - Australia

Editorial & Design

Editor

Adam Mathew

Deputy Editor

Paul Taylor

Contributors

James Cottée, Dan Staines, James Ellis, Dave Kozicki, Toby McCasker, Nathan Lawrence, Adam Guetti, Martin Gladstone, James O'Connor, Dylan Burns, Trent van der Jagt

Art Director

Stephanie Goh

Designer

Ryan Stuart

Creative Director

Paul Cook

Publishing & Circulation

Circulation Enquiries
(02) 9186 9114

Advertising & Marketing

National Business Manager
Nikki Turnbull
(02) 9186 9104

How to contact us

Tel (02) 9186 9186
Fax (02) 9186 9187
Email ops@citrusmedia.com.au
Official PlayStation Magazine
PO Box 20154
World Square
NSW 2002

Want to subscribe?

Call 136 116
(NZ residents
+61 2 9282 8000)
Fax (02) 9267 4363
www.magshop.com.au

Management

Director

Jim Flynn

Financial Controller

Stuart Harle

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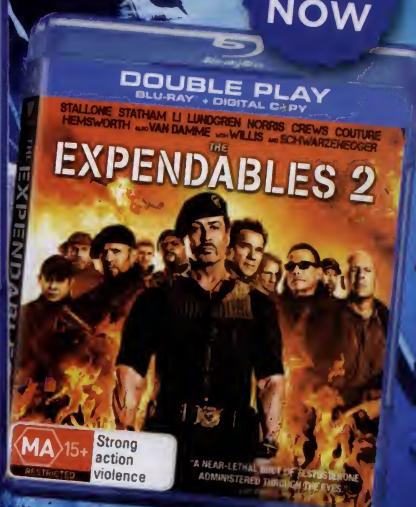
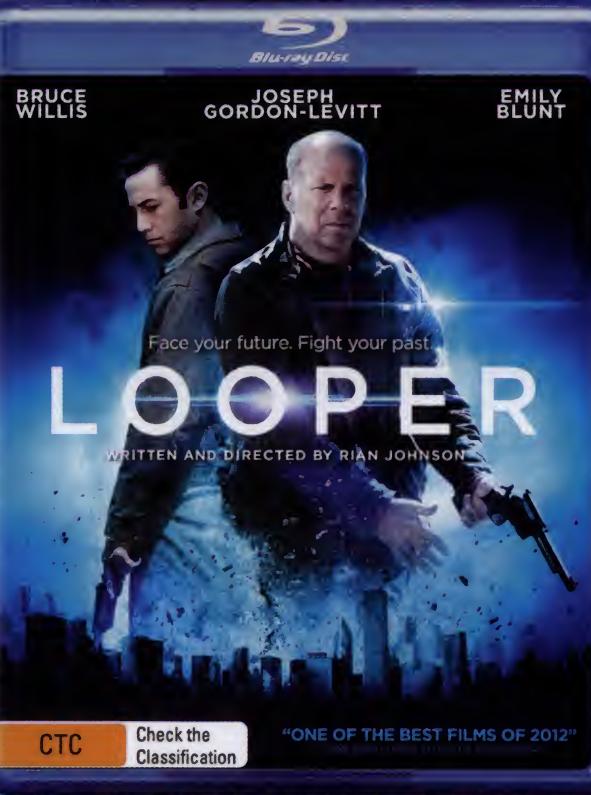
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Gamers soon to be art critics

Two PlayStation exclusives on show at the world's most influential modern art museum

Videogames are one step closer to being popularly accepted as an art form after the world renowned Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York announced it would add 14 videogames to its collection in March this year. The collection will include such PlayStation classics as *Katamari Damacy* and *Vib-Ribbon* as well as cross-platform titles *Portal*, *Myst* and *Flow*.

MoMA senior curator, Paola Antonelli, believes videogames are a form of art.

"But they are also design, and a design

approach is what we chose for this new foray into this universe. The games are selected as outstanding examples of interaction design," she said.

This latest recognition of videogames as a creative medium succeeds 'The Art of Video Games' exhibition held by the Smithsonian American Art Museum last year. The exhibition detailed 40 years of gaming history with particular focus on the interaction between graphics, technology and storytelling. 80 games



In Short

A brief look at this month's news



were selected to represent the industry including *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, *Heavy Rain*, *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Metal Gear Solid*, and *Final Fantasy VII*.

But they're not just confined to art galleries – videogames have also attracted Grammy nominations. *Journey* soundtrack composer Austin Wintory has been nominated for such an award for Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media. Wintory remarked the music industry's recognition of videogames is long overdue. "I almost feel ashamed that so much great stuff has been done over the last decade that for reasons unknown didn't make the cut," he said. *Journey* is the first videogame score to have been nominated for a Grammy.

Yet in spite of all this artistic acclaim videogames still have their share of naysayers. In 2010 film critic Roger Ebert famously stated "Videogames can never be art." Ebert later amended his

statement by claiming "no videogamer now living will survive long enough to experience the medium as an art form," in a Chicago Sun-Times blog. His argument rested on the perception that nobody can point out a game worthy of comparison with the great poets, novelists or film makers.

Ebert then went on to question why gamers are so concerned with their medium being defined as art. He wrote "Do they require validation? In defending their gaming against parents, spouses, children, partners, co-workers or other critics, do they want to be able to look up from the screen and explain, I'm studying a great form of art." The blog attracted almost 5,000 comments, many questioning Ebert's judgement. After this latest addition to the Museum of Modern Art we wonder if he would like to amend that statement once again?

► **Martin Gladstone**



► **Hideo Kojima is trolling the world with an edgy new trailer for *The Phantom Pain***, which shows a wounded soldier who looks suspiciously like our old pal Snake awaken from a coma, only to be confronted by flaming flower petals, a flaming Volgin, and a flying helicopter-eating whale. This could be a teaser trailer for *Ground Zeroes* or *Metal Gear Solid V*. Or a sequel to *Snatcher*, who knows...

► **Naughty Dog founder cum THQ bigwig Jason Rubin has announced that the infamous Dildo Bat in *Saints Row: The Third* has killed more people than the entire population of the United States.** The co-op friendly urban sandbox crime sim has also sold over 5.5 million copies, and that was before THQ's successful Humble Bundle. Sounds like Jase is firming up plans for *SR4*.

► **iAy, caramba! Bertrand Chaverot, managing director of Ubisoft Brazil, has let slip that the next *Assassin's Creed* game will take place in Brazil.** Chaverot made the revelation to the Portuguese-language site 'Techtudo'. Players will presumably be able to indulge in a spot of free running in the Mysterious Cities of Gold, before taking a refreshing dip in Lake Titicaca.

► **More PS4 rumours!** The latest scuttlebutt from 'internal sources' asserts that the PS4 has the code name 'Thebes.' Both the CPU and GPU are supposedly 28nm chips from AMD, and production bottlenecks could push launch all the way back to spring 2014. Still a way off, then.

► **Japanese police are using the PlayStation Vita to fight crime.** A recent episode of a *Cops*-style real-life crime show showed the Japanese rozzers trailing an identity thief by using a Vita as a 'wi-fi signal detector.'

► **Blizzard has got *Diablo III* up and running on consoles – but the developer has no idea what to do with it.** The builds currently being tinkered with are still at the experimental stage, and no formal decision has been made whether or not to port the smash hit PC/Mac dungeon-crawler to the PS3.

► **If you like mobile gaming, hand-to-hand combat, and badonkadonks, then prepare to get excited: *Dead or Alive 5* is coming to the Vita.** Dubbed *Dead or Alive 5+*, the supple Tecmo Koei grappler is launching in Japan on March 20. Alas, no word on a Western release.

► **Casual games only account for 10% of the money spent on video games in the past year – the rest went on the proper 'hardcore' games that we know and love.** These reassuring figures were revealed at the Digital Game Monetization Summit in San Francisco. Looks like Facebook gaming was just a fad after all, eh readers?

► **Ken Levine has taken heed of all the fanboy whinging about the 'generic' cover art for *BioShock Infinite*, and has announced that the game will have a reversible cover slip.** Gamers who still aren't satisfied will be able to download a selection of even more covers and print out their own. Happy?

▶ INTERVIEW

Small games, big ideas

Die Gute Fabrik (which translates to 'the good factory') worked with **Bernie Schulenberg** to make *Where Is My Heart?* for PS minis, a platformer like no other.



Who are you and what type of games do you make?

BS: I'm from Germany and I work together with Die gute Fabrik, a small game studio in Copenhagen, Denmark. The whole crew is quite individualist and each one of us has our own particularities, when it comes to making games or the things we're interested in. But we do have some common values [such as a] sense of style and storytelling. Something hand-crafted, and personal.

Minis were originally designed to invigorate the PSP market but now they're made to work on PSP, Vita and PS3. Is that a benefit or drawback?

“There’s an awesome Christmas party in my heart and everyone is invited”

BS: A benefit. Minis can now reach players of three PlayStation systems, that's what you want as a game developer, to have your game be accessible to more types of players.

What's the biggest challenge in making a PlayStation game that's less than 100mb in size?

BS: The only one who felt the 100 MB limit was Alessandro, our musician, who we had to tell "You have less than so and so MB for whatever you want to compose for this game." He did an amazing job. He ended up scoring an honourable mention for Excellence In Audio at the IGF 2012. For the rest of us, it was our first stab at console development. At some point we had to realize that we couldn't get the PlayStation engine to display [the] viewports and have levels bigger than 512 times 512 pixels. So we had to make the best of it [and] ended up having small compact levels. Which in the end turned out quite a lucky constraint to have, because we noticed during testing that players would get exhausted and frustrated in a bad way for levels that took them more than 5 minutes to solve. It does feel neat though to have this small compact little game with so much heart we put in it. I hope players can feel this when they play. Actually when I do spy on people playing it and I see how they are immersed and happy I do reciprocate this feeling. These moments do feel like there's an awesome Christmas party inside my heart and everybody is invited.

What other minis game do you have planned, and why is it going to be awesome?

BS: We're not planning to release more minis. We're currently porting *Where Is My Heart?* to PC/Mac/Linux. Die gute Fabrik is also working on *Mutazione*, a swamp opera, graphic adventure, which I'm not part of the dev team but I'm very excited for. And then Douglas [Wilson] and Nils [Deneken] are both also working on *Johann Sebastian Joust*, a no-graphics, digitally-enabled playground game, which uses the PlayStation Move controllers. It will appear in a four-game package called *Sportsfriends* [see page 43]. I'm currently fully loaded with the port of *Where Is My Heart?* After that I have some ideas for a new game, an explorative adventure game, which I'm excited about. 



OPS VAULT

February

2005 ▶



You could almost hear the creaks in the release schedule before being blitzed by PS3 next year. 2005 was going to be

the last year of big PS2 releases – such as *Metal Gear Solid 3* and *Final Fantasy XII*, *Resident Evil 4* – along with a stack of good middle-ground titles – *The Punisher*, *Scarface*, *Timesplitters: Future Perfect*. We reviewed *Gran Turismo 4* ("Petrol heads would be clinically insane to miss it," 10 out of 10) and taught you how to beat *GTA: San Andreas* over 17 pages.

2007 ▶



Left-handed people make better gamers, according to one of our news pieces. Without anyone to confirm this in the office,

we went on to review *Resistance: Fall of Man* ("Flawless control scheme" and "the greatest console FPS ever produced" to score a top-notch 10) and *Final Fantasy XII* – looks like it slipped from 2005 for another 10 out of 10 – plus *Okami*. We told you then to not "let this cult classic in the making pass you by" as it earned a solid 9. Then *Superman Returns* got a 4.

2011 ▶



Last year, you, our readers, voted for *Uncharted 3* as your game of the year, and you'll have to see p60 for 2012. The

issue was action-packed: lots of details on *Mass Effect 3*, including the dubious multiplayer; a huge preview on *Prototype 2*; and a world-first review of *SoulCalibur V*. We also devoted four pages to hijinks in *Skyrim*. Frankly, we still haven't tired of putting buckets on people's heads – nor so in *Skyrim*.



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PS3 PlayStation 3

EA GAMES

THIS MONTH

Your 28-day planner of games and the good stuff!



Feb 7

Dead Space 3

The world's unluckiest engineer returns to space before crash landing on the frozen planet of Tau Volantis. Isaac can now create weapons and tools, and the full campaign also be played in co-op.



Feb 7

Lincoln

Spielberg tackles the 16th President's final months in office as he attempts to abolish slavery, end the American Civil War and unite the country. Makes our dreams look meagre in comparison.



Feb 12

Aliens: Colonial Marines

A true sequel to James Cameron's iconic film from the same guys who made *Borderlands*. You should probably consider wearing an extra pair of underpants though.



Feb 14

Valentines Day

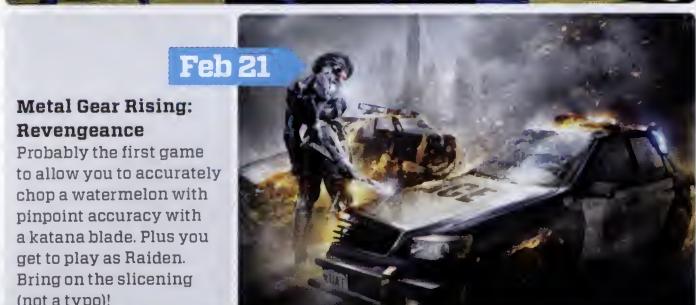
Spend the day with the significant other or delve into two survival horror games released days before.



Feb 17

Tropfest

The world's biggest short film festival comes to Sydney's Domain with live screenings held across the country. The best part: it's free!



Feb 21

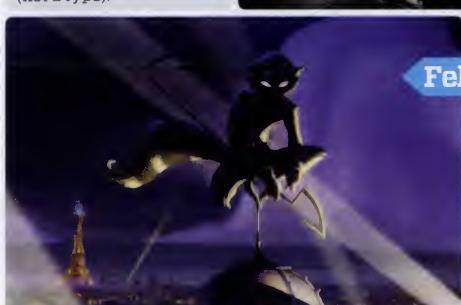
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Probably the first game to allow you to accurately chop a watermelon with pinpoint accuracy with a katana blade. Plus you get to play as Raiden. Bring on the slicing (not a typo)!

Feb 23

Soundwaves

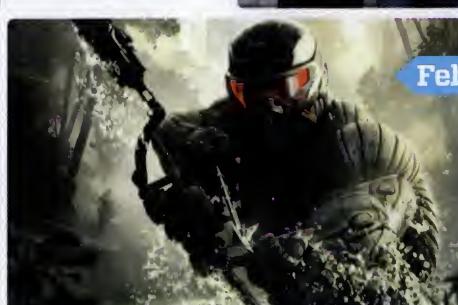
With Metallica, Lincoln Park, Blink 182 and The Offspring headlining you'll be sorry if you miss it. Rock out with your sunblock out.



Feb 28

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Time travel as our furry friend sneaks, thieves, explores and fights his way through a world twice the size of previous instalments.



Feb 28

Crysis 3

Don the nanosuit again as Prophet, and save 2047 New York from the alien Ceph by using their weapons against them. Powered by the legendary CryEngine.

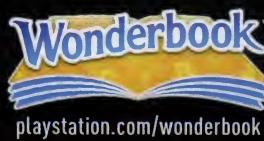
Can't miss...

Persona 4 Golden

FEBRUARY 22

Behold, the remake of the greatest game on PS2 you never, ever played. *Persona 4 Golden* is the definitive version *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 4* and it's overflowing with new content like new Personas to collect, new story events along with all-new characters, and stunning new anime cutscenes.

An illustration of a character from the game Persona 4 Golden.



playstation.com/wonderbook

POTTERMORE



DISCOVER THE

BOOK OF SPELLS

*Grab your wand and learn the spells,
just like a student at Hogwarts.*

THE WORLD IS IN PLAY



Mild supernatural themes and violence



The image shows the PS3 logo, which consists of the letters 'PS3' in a stylized font. Below the logo, the text 'PlayStation.3' is written in a smaller, standard font.



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Around the World

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in tech and gaming



BATTING AWAY

ARIZONA, USA

The original – and arguably the *most awesomest* – batmobile driven by Adam West in the 1960s TV series is being auctioned for the first time ever on Jan 19th in Scottsdale, Arizona. Starting as a 1955 Lincoln Futura concept car, it was purchased by George Barris in 1959 for a whopping \$1. 20th Century Fox approached him soon after to make a car for the then upcoming Batman TV series. George went to work and equipped the machine with a bat-scope, bat-smoke, a bat-phone, a tire inflation device and a bat ray projector among others.



MOBILE EMOTION

NEW YORK, USA

Smartphones could soon be able to sense your puny emotions thanks to a research project titled The Bridge Project by the University of Rochester. The technology measures 12 different aspects of your speech then maps that data into 6 different emotions. With an 81% accuracy rating you might have a hard time convincing your mobile device that you're not insanely pissed off at a loved one for disrupting your precious game time, or a sad panda when your battery is about to die. We wonder how it would deal with an extended session of *Dark Souls*? A confused explosion, perhaps.



SILVER SURFER

CALIFORNIA, USA

A swimming robot has set a new world record for the longest distance travelled by an autonomous vehicle, 16,668 kilometres. Nicknamed Papa Mau the record holder set off from San Francisco over a year ago before arriving recently in Queensland. Presumably to stave off catastrophic boredom, the robot gathered a massive amount of high-res ocean data to learn more about the state of the Pacific. Our own research suggests it's blue. Looking like a high-tech surfboard of some description, Papa Mau consumes zero fuel but converts wave energy so it can forward thrust.



REAL LIFE HUD

BELGIUM

We may all be walking around the city with a heads-up-display (HUD) thanks to the recent development of LCD displays integrated into contact lenses. Though it'll be nice to see an ammo count for our stapler, it's the medical and cosmetic fields that will benefit the most from this by helping to reduce light damage to the iris and allowing you to change eye colour instantaneously. But think of the gaming possibilities? Imagine a bar fight complete with health bars and super attacks? Actually on second thoughts maybe it's not such a great idea.



REBOOTED

BLETCHLY, ENGLAND

The world's oldest digital computer, the Harwell Dekatron from the 1950s, has been restored to its original condition and is now operational. And yes, you're absolutely right – it does not even have the Internets, lol. Weighing in at roughly two tonne the antique can muster enough computing power to rival the most basic of calculators. Originally built for the UK Atomic Research Establishment the beast is now being housed at the National Museum of Computing in England. All we can say is thank god for advancements in technology.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 **Call of Duty: Black Ops II**
Activision
- 2 **Far Cry 3**
Ubisoft
- 3 **Assassin's Creed III**
Ubisoft
- 4 **FIFA 13**
Electronic Arts
- 5 **Hitman: Absolution**
Square Enix

JAPAN



- 1 **Dai-2-Ji Super Robot Taisen OG**
Namco Bandai Games
- 2 **Hot Shots Golf: World Invitational**
Sony Computer Entertainment
- 3 **Call of Duty: Black Ops II**
Activision
- 4 **Fate/Stay Night (Realta Nua)**
Kadokawa Shoten
- 5 **Atelier Totori Plus: The Alchemist of Arland 2 Gust**
Gust

USA



- 1 **Call of Duty: Black Ops II**
Activision
- 2 **Far Cry 3**
Ubisoft
- 3 **Assassin's Creed III**
Ubisoft
- 4 **Madden NFL 13**
Electronic Arts
- 5 **NBA 2K13**
Take-Two Interactive

▶ INFOCUS

The Last of Us

It's been 13 months since the first trailer for *The Last of Us* blew our minds with its mushroom maniacs. Then, for the longest time, they disappeared. Naughty Dog's teasing shifted well away from "the doom 'shrooms" to showcase what they do best: character-driven stories.

As we approach the May 7 2013 release date it seems that mushrooms are back on the menu. And oh, how deliciously they explode...



In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



“What makes me sad is that people don’t engage with playing the riddle, trying to solve the riddle. It’s like a scavenger hunt where people aren’t collecting the first clue.”

Far Cry 3 writer Jeffrey Yohalem, expressing his despair at the fact that gamers didn’t really try to understand what his game was actually about.



“The cuts are everywhere. It doesn’t feel like we are pushing any boundaries now. Why bother?”

Rockstar Games prez Sam Houser back in ‘04, lamenting the removal of sex acts from *GTA San Andreas*.



“Maybe he and I had an argument. He’s known for that. I had to get mad at one point, which is unusual for me. It really is. But he didn’t hit me or anything, like some of the stories I’ve heard.”

Former Microsoft vice president of games publishing Ed Fries, reminiscing about a rather heated business meeting he once had with *Sonic the Hedgehog* creator Yuji Naka.

► INTERVIEW

And high heels. I like high heels.

Yuji Korekado & Etsu Tamari: [uproarious laughter]

YK: First off, originally it was Yoji Shinkawa’s design. Raiden uses his katana in a rather original, unique style. It’s not an existing style but a very original style. They are not high heels. They are parts used to mobilise his feet in all directions, so this is the purpose they serve. We believe this adds a lot of unique aspects to this character regarding his combat style as well as overall aspects. But yeah they are not high heels.

Would you agree Raiden is a big girl?

ET: I guess that could be said of Raiden in the past. However in this game it’s several years after *MGS4*. Raiden used to follow this hero figure that was Snake, but now in this game he’s presented as an independent character; emotionally completely independent, an adult. We believe these internal aspects are reflected physically. We believe he’s very manly now.

He wasn’t very popular when he was first introduced, so why did you want to focus on him?

YK: We were all aware that he’s a controversial character. We did encounter very different opinions when he first came out. A big reason we chose him is we felt he had huge potential as a main character of a game. In *MGS4*’s cut scenes he has some very original actions and unique moves we thought would be very interesting and would be pretty nice to reproduce as part of a game. That’s why this project started moving. Especially being a cyborg, he is capable of actions that can be beyond human, and his high frequency blade is not like a gun or anything – it forces close combat, and we thought, “That would work really well for this game.”

How do Japanese gamers perceive him as opposed to Western gamers?

ET: Overseas in Western places, in *MGS4* in general, I have the perception that he was again a controversial character, but after that game I have the feeling that people actually liked him. That said,

it’s mainly Western gamers that aren’t used to Japanese games, and they still might not like him. It might surprise you to know that in Japan he is also considered a rather controversial character, but he’s very popular here as well.

YK: He is very controversial, but one thing we think is very interesting in this game is to see how Raiden has matured and how he has evolved and grown up into a man through the *Metal Gear* series. Not only physically – people will be able to notice through the dialogue how much he has grown up and matured.

What’s the biggest thing about him that’s changed?

YK: We think everything has changed in Raiden. The looks, the way he thinks. Before he used to be somehow Snake’s apprentice. He was his shadow. He learned from him. In this game, he’s the opposite: he’s in a position where he has to share his knowledge, and teach people. His movements and actions are really cool, and entirely due to Platinum Games. We thought this was an element that wasn’t there in *MGS2*. In *MGS4* his sections were pretty good, but they’re even better here.

What’s it been like working with Platinum Games?

YK: As you know, this time we’re not only working here in KGS, we’re working a lot with Platinum Games. They’re a very different developer, and this developer happens to be a rather unique and very deep core developer. So it has been very interesting; a very eye-opening, refreshing experience for us.

What’s the relationship like?

YK: The relationship is very good, and I would call it a very pleasant and easy one. Now why do I say that? Because Platinum Games are very clear what they want and what they do, so they speak freely their minds on what they want to do. They just tell us, “This is what we want, this is what we want to do.” Of course, we are also very free to say, “You know what, this is what we want to do. On this we cannot step back.” There has

“[Kojima] has been my boss ever since I was a newbie. Every time I make a mistake, he goes hard on me. Every time he beats me, I understand.”

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance is a pretty unusual turn for Hideo's precious, and throws up many a query. Kojima Studio creative producer **Yuji Korekado** and writer **Etsu Tamari** answer the most important one first: Why does Raiden wear high heels?

been very good feedback from both sides, and this has made the relationship so much better and very refreshing for us.

What are some of the things that they've wanted to do that you haven't wanted to compromise on?

YK: Well, first they wanted to bring some characters from previous *Metal Gear* games, they wanted to bring back to life some characters that are dead in the series. We were very clear on that: that was no good for us. We are also reviewing the general feeling of the world that is reflected in this game, so for example the setting of certain characters and certain visual aspects, we want them to be uniform in the game. On that end, they have suggested certain things that we had to shut down because we didn't want to do it that way.

What has been your biggest argument with Platinum Games?

YK: It's probably the very first argument we had with them: They wanted to change the whole story.

The whole story?

ET: Yes. When this game was being developed, the story was completed up to a certain point. When we took the decision of getting Platinum Games to work on the game design, they wanted to change several aspects of the story because they told us it didn't fit the style of the game. However changing several elements of the game would leave a lot of contradictions, so in the end we ended up changing the whole story. That was a huge argument.

So is it a Metal Gear game?

ET: Of course.

It's so incredibly different to everything Metal Gear has ever been, though. Are you freaking out?

YK: Not at all. The reason we aren't afraid at all is because the game right now is almost completed, and we like it a lot, and we're very confident in this game. Of course there are parts that we believe the fans from previous *Metal Gear* games will say, "Oh this is different." But more than that, we're very confident all *Metal Gear* fans will find several elements that they will enjoy and like.

Which parts are you most concerned about?

YK: Our concern might be that players who are used to *Metal Gear* games and aren't used to action games won't be able to complete the whole game and go through it. This is why we have asked Platinum Games to put a function in the difficulty settings that will make it easier for people who aren't used to action games to go through this one.

And what are you most impressed with?

YK: How cool Raiden looks now! This is far beyond expectations that we had going into development of this game.

If Raiden went to a karaoke bar, what song would he want to sing?

ET: Well, since Raiden is quite fond of movies, he'd probably sing any theme of some movie. Maybe the *Top Gun* theme.

Quick follow-up on nothing: Does Hideo beat you if you displease him?

YK: He has been my boss ever since I joined the gaming industry. Ever since I was a newbie, I've been working with Kojima. That relationship hasn't changed. Every time I make a mistake or something is wrong, he goes hard on me. Kojima is that close to the development area, and still to this day I have many things to learn from him. Every time he beats me, I understand. I say, "Yeah, you're right. I still have to learn that from you."

ET: [laughing] Overall Kojima-san takes the game creation process very, very seriously. That's why he at times gets serious. Because of all that passion he puts into games, we also feel the responsibility to correspond to that.

 **Toby McCasker**



► TOP TEN

STARTERS FOR PS ALL-STARS 2

The announcement of *PlayStation All-Star*'s roster, unsurprisingly, erupted in quarrels Jerry Springer would be proud of. Sure, not everyone can get time in the limelight, but here are ten personalities we think were robbed of their chance to play with the big boys.



1

Ethan Mars

This forgetful wonder is a sleeper hit waiting to happen. Anybody that's played *Heavy Rain* knows Ethan is willing to get down, dirty and even cut off a finger or two. But an 'X to Jason' super, filled with fatherly screams and QTEs? Now that is a million dollar idea waiting to happen. We expect our cheque in the mail, SuperBot.



6

Chell

Anybody who can take on two killer robots, while simultaneously solving infuriating puzzles has our vote. Plus, creating portals to send enemies all around the stage and a super that unleashes GLaDOS's scientific wrath? Yes please.



7

Kevin Butler

One of the greatest creations in advertising history, including Mr. Butler would be the stuff dreams are made of. We can see it now. Exchanging blows while raving off witty, inflammatory remarks. This could b— no, wait... lawsuit.



8

Dark Souls Hero

Don't think *PASBR1* was 'hardcore' enough? Add this warrior to the mix and you'll change your tune. Run into one of Drake's 20 barrels – dead. Cop a blade of chaos to the face – dead. Accidentally trip on ledge... Yep, you guessed it.



9

Sully

Is there such a thing as 'too much' Sully? 'Nay,' we say. Everybody's favourite grandpa should put on those fisty-cuffs – Hawaiian shirt and all. A fight against Nate would even answer the classic question of age versus beauty.



10

Tony Hawk

The famous hipster might be getting a little old to be pulling off 'sick 900s,' but don't write him off just yet. Fix the skater to his board and you'll have one of the most agile combatants in the arena. Then there's the potential super that would have him launching unsold *Ride* peripherals at unsuspecting foes. It'd be totally rad, man. Booyakasha!



2

Old Snake

Snake might be a tad frail in his old age, but that doesn't mean he can't still kick some ass. We're guessing a level three super that culminates in a 30-minute cutscene would also be the ultimate weapon against your opponent's sanity.



3

Sora

If we can be given Sir Daniel Fortesque, why not Sora? With the roots of *Kingdom Hearts* to draw from, the key-loving hero could summon iconic Disney characters to aid him. They would be just like Pokémons, only not as useless.



4

Catherine

What's the one thing we fear more than an unforgiving soldier and his vengeful plot against the gods? A psychotic lover who causes nightmares filled with anthropomorphic sheep. Fear her passive/aggressive chain combos!



5

Lara Croft

Considering her return to the spotlight, Lara's involvement in *All-Stars* would have been a logical move. Think this neophyte explorer is too fragile to compete? We see it this way: she can still fight a tiger and win. Can you?



► INFOCUS

Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2

Have you ever wanted to make someone's head explode just by punching him? In *Fist of the North Star*, you can! This legendary post-apocalyptic anime series is a mash-up of *Mad Max* and *Bruce Lee*, and is possibly the manliest TV show of all time! *Ken's Rage 2* will let you pummel your way through the entire epic story of the original manga, taking control of over 20 manly characters, and bursting brains in meticulously recreated boss battles.

New fighting moves from the *Warriors* series have been integrated to make the fights faster and more dynamic, plus there's a 'Dream Mode' with an all-new story, and new online co-op and versus modes. The heads start exploding on February 1.

▶ IN REALITY

Obsessive Racing Communities

As seen in: *Burnout Paradise, Test Drive Unlimited 2, Need for Speed Most Wanted*

When the *Burnout* series first took to the streets, we asked ourselves how the people living in the series' locations were going about their lives when insane motorists were constantly holding races over their major roads and smashing each other into incoming traffic. Then *Burnout Paradise* came along, and this question was answered – those other motorists aren't really living in any true sense. Paradise City, despite all its architecture, exists purely to be raced in. The green grass and pretty girls sung about by Guns N' Roses seem of little consequence.

It's the same with every open world racing game. Every character you meet is singularly devoted to driving, despite never having anywhere to go. Pink slip races, while realistic, seem silly when racers don't seem to exist outside of their cars. In a way the 'scene' of underground street racing is captured quite well, although real street racing circuits often can't afford to be that upfront, nor drive under the same conditions.

These obsessive communities and areas are more realistically depicted in some games than others. The notion of underground street racing circuits in LA, à la *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*, isn't particularly far-fetched. Life imitates art: street racers are as heavily influenced by *The Fast and the Furious* as our videogames are, and the sort of drift-heavy arcade racing we're used to in these



"I'm a fuel injected suicide machine. I am the rocker, I am the roller, I am the out-of-controller!"

games is currently quite popular in LA. On the other hand, while *Test Drive Unlimited 2*'s Ibiza and, to a far lesser extent, Oahu both have illegal street racing scenes, the game's largely empty roads and buildings are misleading, and these races very rarely occur during the day as they do in-game.

More realistic street racing depictions pop up in open world action games like *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Sleeping Dogs*. A YouTube search brings up plenty of footage of street racing in New York and Hong Kong, but neither town is designed specifically for them. Still, some areas are designed to make concessions for racers: in Łódź, Poland's third largest city, street racing is organised and

allowed in closed-off sections of the city on certain nights, during which speed limits are abolished. Of course, part of the thrill of a game like *Burnout* is being able to zip between traffic and take risks, which sadly seems to be part of the appeal for a lot of young racers too – statistics indicate that 804 people were killed in street driving incidents in the USA between 2001 and 2006 (although more up to date statistics are hard to find there's little to suggest that this figure has dropped), the majority of them aged between 16 and 29.

Ultimately these open worlds operate as metaphors. In real life, the 'Mid Night Club' that inspired the series of the same disbanded way back in 1999.  **James O'Connor**

Australian Story

In Australia, illegal street racing is a continuing concern, despite anti-'hoon' laws. A national survey conducted in 2007 suggested that 68% of motorists had seen a street race happening, while 51% of motorists under 29 claimed to have been challenged at traffic lights or under other circumstances. Our inglorious street racing history traces back to the late '60s, when performance models of popular local cars starting springing up.

▶ NUMBER CRUNCHING

125

The number of copies, in millions, of *Grand Theft Auto* games shipped – assuming you tally the figures for every game in the series so far... ▶

82

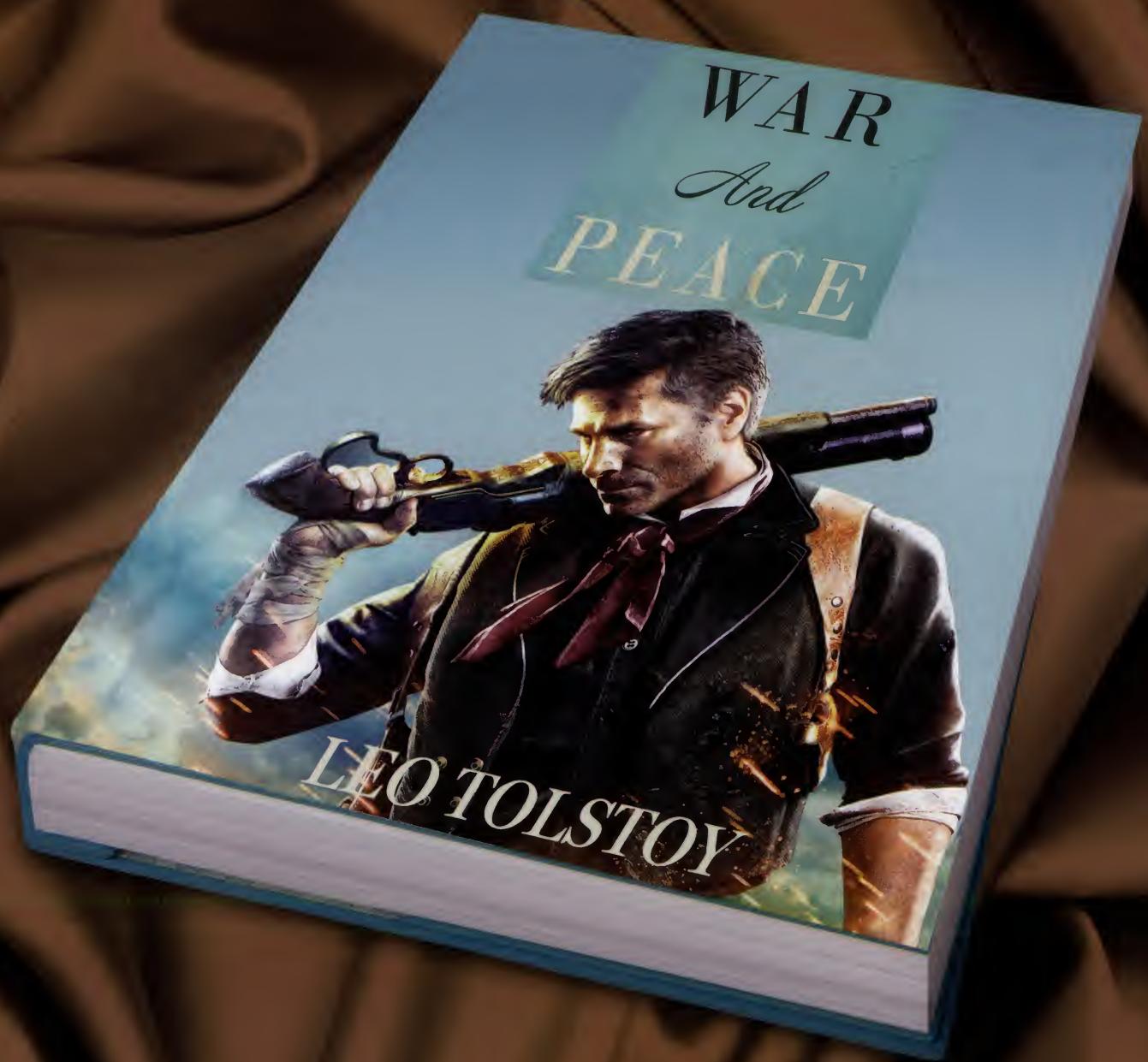
▲ Number of centuries of in-game time that gamers have spent playing *Assassin's Creed III*, as of December 12, 2012. "Knife to meet you!"

Separated at Birth!

NO. 48 *God of War*'s Kratos and Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson

It's not just goatee beards, shaved domes, and bulging uber-pecks that these two beefcakes have in common – both have committed unspeakable acts that forever taint their souls. Sure, he killed his own family in a fit of rage, but Kratos' conscience is practically spotless when compared to the guilt Johnson must feel for taking part in that cinematic atrocity *Southland Tales*. *Doom* sucked too.

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“Lame cover is lame.
Left it on the shelf”



NYTomes

“Really? Generic shotgun guy?
More like War & Piece of Shit”

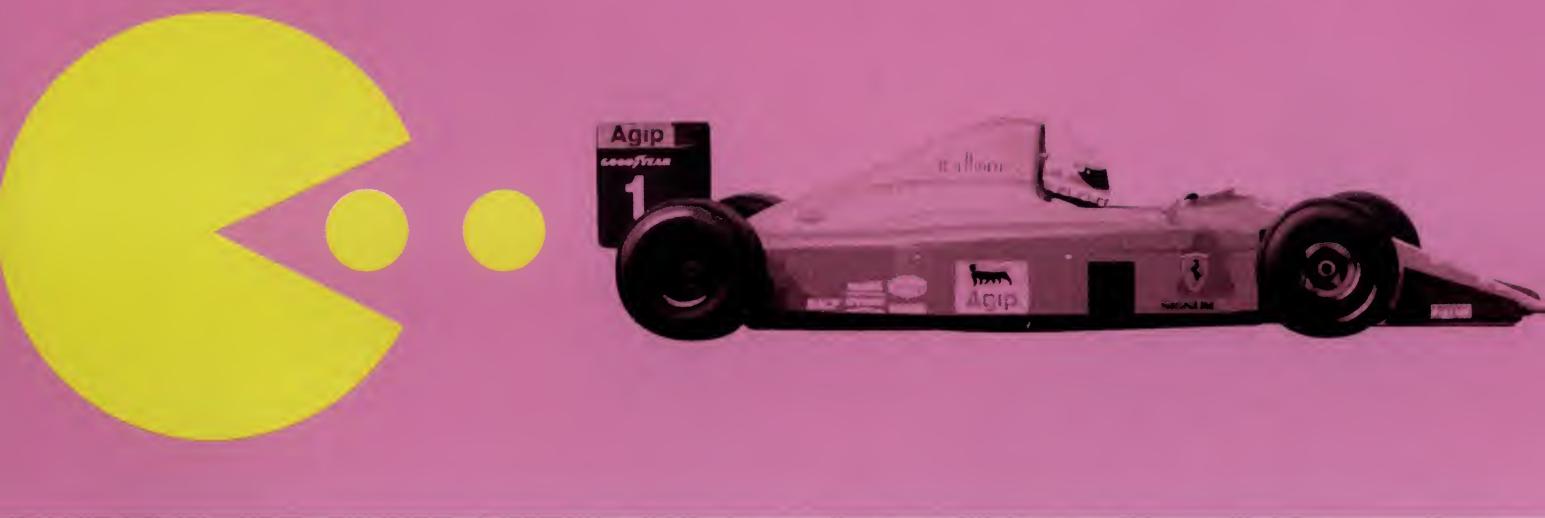


Meilson Ratings

“That art...ugh.
TL:DR”



USAYesterday



► OPINION

WHERE ART THOU?

If a Ferrari can be art, so can Pac-Man

You've probably never heard of John Barnard. He's a design engineer. A racing car designer, to be precise. One of the most innovative racing car design engineers of his generation.

Barnard conceived and built F1's first carbon fibre monocoque, winning three consecutive Formula One world championships for McLaren in the process. Later, at Ferrari, Barnard was instrumental in developing the semi-automatic gearbox, a system now used by all F1 teams.

The Ferrari 641 with which the Ferrari team competed in the 1990 Formula One season was a slightly more developed version of its predecessor, the 1989 Ferrari 640 designed by John Barnard.

It's a thing of beauty, really, if you're into that sort of thing. A gorgeous car, one that F1 fans continue to fawn over today. My point is that the Ferrari 641 is such a good-looking car that there's one in the permanent collection at the New York Museum of Modern Art.

"This Formula 1 Racing Car – with an exterior body designed by Barnard and interior chassis engineered and designed by the Ferrari company – clearly illustrates the modernist dictum 'form follows function,'" reads supporting text on the museum's website. "The shape of its exterior has been determined by the laws of physics and aerodynamics [...] The sleek and sculptural silhouette of this Ferrari allows air to pass over the body with minimal drag and maximal down-force, which ensures precision handling even at speeds in excess of

two hundred miles per hour."

There's a Ferrari in the Museum of Modern Art and nobody has a problem with it.

If you Google the phrase "Ferraris are not art" you will get one result. A single result, from a five-year-old thread on a Ferrari forum. If you Google the phrase "Video games are not art" you get 192,000 results.

I'm not into art but Jonathan Jones is. Jonathan Jones is a man I'd never heard of, writing for a website I had never read. In his blog for UK newspaper *The Guardian*, Jones

"There's a Ferrari in the MoMA and nobody has a problem with it"

berates the MoMA for its plans to exhibit a collection of videogames starting next year. The collection will start with 14 games, including *Pac-Man*, *vib-ribbon*, *Tetris*, *Portal*, *SimCity 2000*, *f/Ow* and more.

"Exhibiting *Pac-Man* and *Tetris* alongside Picasso and Van Gogh will mean game over for any real understanding of art," writes Jones, ignoring the fact there's more to the MoMA than paint on canvas.

Jones goes on to casually insult an aesthetician – a philosopher who specialises in aesthetics – who defended games as art during a philosophy conference at Oxford University. Jones attended a few years ago by asking, "What was a professor doing playing all these games?" Jones's opinion of games at this point is clear, and it's clear he'd rather disregard them from his perch rather

than actually experience them himself.

"So, the same museum that owns such great works of art as Ma Jolie by Picasso, Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh and Vir Heroicus Sublimis by Barnett Newman is also to own *SimCity*, *Portal*, and *Dwarf Fortress*," continues Jones, struggling and failing to suppress his art boner for all things of the framed variety and apparently oblivious to the fact the MoMA is home to more than just paintings.

The MoMA's collection extends across architecture and design, drawings, painting, sculpture, photography, prints, illustrated books and artist's books, film, and electronic media. Shouldn't an art bod for a prominent UK publication know that?

There's a helicopter in the MoMA. A Bell 47D1. It's part of the MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design, which is where the videogame collection is going. They're not going to slide a *Pac-Man* cabinet up beside Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup Cans, and only a staggeringly colossal fool would assume otherwise.

It's clear why art toffs persist in debating what's essentially a non-topic. Jones's column on videogames chalked up 567 comments at the time of writing. Just two weeks before it his piece about a new photography exhibit at London's Victoria and Albert Museum had three comments.

Wading into an argument you're unprepared for in search of some cheap traffic from facepalming gamers across the world? Well, that's what the internet's all about, isn't it?



OPINION
Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-video game journalist who stuck pasta on a paper plate as a child and was told it was art.

► INFOCUS

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Due for release on PS3 and Vita this February, *Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time* has been recently confirmed as a Cross Buy title: buy it on PS3 and you can download the Vita version from PSN at no additional cost. Sweet. And since it's Cross Play compatible, your progress is saved across both versions. Double sweet.

But that's not all. The PS3 version also comes with a cool "AR Treasures" mode in which the Vita functions as a kind of X-Ray scope for finding collectables. All you do is point the Vita at your TV and then track down the goodies highlighted on the touchscreen. Triple sweet!





► OPINION

THE END OF HISTORY

The console wars may finally be over – and this could be the worst thing that's ever happened to the games industry...

Nobody I know is excited about the Wii U. This floppy apathy is fed by several factors that are impossible to ignore: The line-up of launch titles is uninspiring, the system itself is under-powered, there's no wired internet connection, and the promised *Mario*, *Zelda*, and *Smash Bros.* sequels are nowhere in sight. The touch-screen controller uses out-of-date technology, and even the USB ports are the old-fashioned 2.0 standard.

Then there's the matter of that 5-gig patch that you're forced to download the first time you boot it up – if you bought the 8-gig model, that's half your HDD space gone before you've even played your first game. It's a tacit admission that every last Wii U console is obsolete the second it rolls off the assembly line.

It gets worse. If the Wii U had processing power in the same ball-park as the upcoming PS4 and Xbox 720, then developers might feel compelled to make games that could be ported across all three, much as games are launched simultaneously on PS3, PC, and 360 today. Instead, the Wii U is trapped in a three-legged-race with the generation that's on the way out, with nothing but gimmicky, poorly-coded ports to show for it. Nintendo has effectively squandered their first-mover advantage – small wonder the company has been losing money lately.

Of course, it's not only Nintendo that has been

cocking up. Microsoft's new Windows 8 operating system has been incredibly divisive. Windows 7 was great for gamers because it gave users the freedom to install whatever software they liked, allowing services like Steam to flourish. But now Microsoft is trying to copy the highly profitable Apple model, where all programs are sold through an app store that they control. This creates unnecessary headaches for developers, and by definition reduces consumer choice.

The guys at Steam are less than thrilled about this turn of events. The word on the street is that they're giving Windows the finger, and will be releasing their own custom PC/console units some time in 2013. It's easy to see these new machines cannibalising a good

deal of the Xbox console market, thanks to the huge range of Steam games, and the never-ending parade of Steam sales and their irresistible 80% discounts.

Is all this chaos good news for PlayStation fans? Not really. Less competition is bad for everyone. Competition sparks innovation, and moves the industry forward – a rising tide lifts all boats. And the reverse is true. If the market stagnates and contracts, then the tide goes out. We'll be left with nothing but syringes and broken dreams. And crabs.

Let's hope that the decision-makers at Nintendo and Microsoft learn from their mistakes, and get their acts together, quick smart. For all our sakes... 

“We'll be left with nothing but syringes and broken dreams. And crabs.”



OPINION
James Cotttee

James Cotttee knows that war never, ever changes. Except when it changes... with transition.

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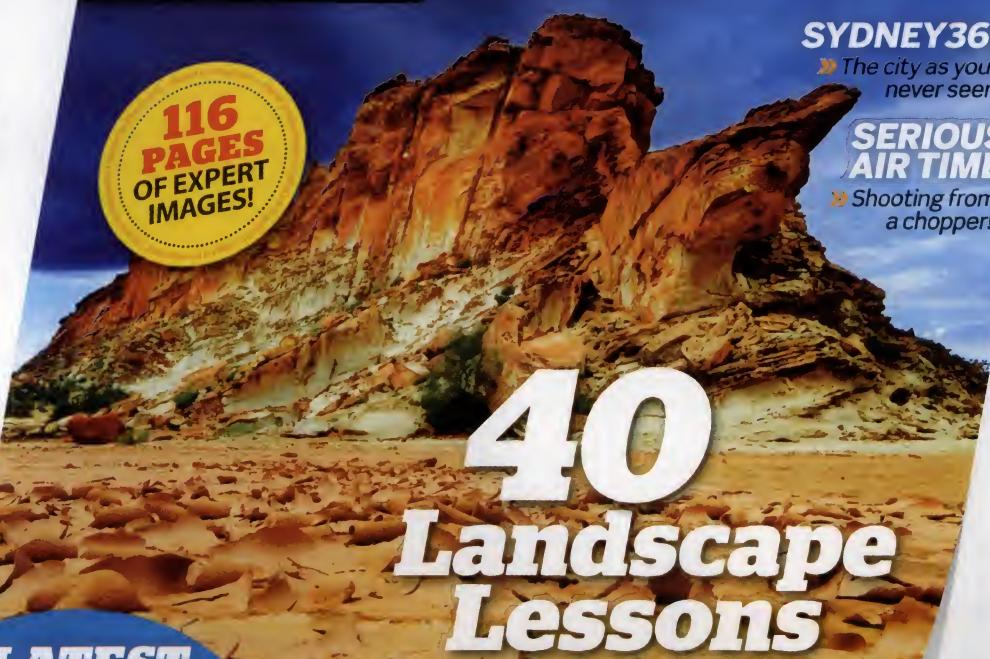
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HERE WE GO AGAIN

Hey OPS,

I'm writing in to have a rant again. This time because once again videogames have become the scapegoat for senseless violence in society; in this case, the horrific school shooting in Connecticut. It was an absolutely terrible tragedy, one that broke my heart, as it did everyone else's.

So you can image the rage when I find an article on Kotaku about the group of people who blamed *Mass Effect* and videogames for the sick act of violence.

I am so tired of reading about how games are to blame for this type of violence in society and that games make people aggressive and violent. There have been studies conducted showing that there is NO link between violence and video games. At all. I remember watching a segment on a morning news show a few months ago, where the reporters spoke to a game designer and psychologist etc.; about this issue and the news presenters were adamant that video games made people, particularly children violent.

I remember getting so angry as no matter how plain and simple the psychologist and game designer attempted to explain and discuss 10

years worth of study into this issue, showing there was no link whatsoever, and that there has never been any proof that there was, the reporters wouldn't have a bar of it. I don't know why but society seems hell bent on blaming this kind of crap on videogames. This industry is huge. If there really was a link, I think there would be more evidence to prove so. But there's not.

People seem to need to blame these types of things on something and I understand that. People need closure; they need explanations for the horrible things that happen in life. But for too long it's been video games. I want to know when it's somebody else's turn to take the blame. Because as an advocate for this industry; I'm over it!

Maddison Jones, via email

We're sick of seeing the flamebait, videogames-are-evil articles on these tragedies as well. Everybody seems to be ignoring the fact that it was the murderer's mother who inadvertently supplied him with his weapons (being the gun enthusiast she was). She also equipped him with the knowledge to handle them effectively by regularly taking him to local shooting ranges.

There are wider issues here, as

with a lot of shootings, such as violent psychosis induced by medication, and other factors the media often ignores.

The negative noise about 'dem vidjagames' is loud; mainstream media here reports on it, and games are an easy target for US news, rather than examining a 200-year-old Constitutional right that can be viewed as being outdated. Gah. Let's move on.

COPING WITH SCOPING

Hello OPS,

Still love the mag.

Now onto the business part of the letter. What is with *Black Ops II*? I love Treyarch and their *Call of Duty* games, especially Zombies, but I am sick of online and the quick-scoping [word redacted] junkies.

I like playing online but when I get killed by a quick-scorer I lose all interest in the game. I like auto assist but they shouldn't have it for sniper rifles. They don't do it in *Battlefield* and that's a great game as well. There is no skill in quick-scoping it just ruins the game. That's all, I'm done.

David Smith, via email

Ah, quick-scoping, you're like the herpes of the *CoD* franchise – nobody wants you but you keep coming back to chafe us every sequel, time and time again.

Many a time we've had somebody turn a corner with their Ballista sniper rifle, shrug off a few rounds from us like it was nothing (thanks, Toughness perk!) and casually unload it into our face like a shotgun. No sane real-life sniper would do that. Why then is it in this game?

And don't even get us started on people who sticky tape – or God's forbid, black texta – the centre of their screens to create their own DIY quick-scope reticule. The surface of your TV screen should be virginal, at all times. We share your rage.



LETTER OF THE
MONTH WINS:
DMC

Read all about it on
p72!



"I can't wait to get into online gaming!" **Don't say that. Stay offline. Stay as long as you can...**



BULLY FOR YOU

Gaming companies need to help stop the online trolling or bullying. You report people constantly on PS3 and it seems to no avail.

If Treyarch played an hour a day they would have banning overload thanks to the rude people and the rude images they conjure up.

How many times should it take to report people? I heard it takes 300 reports on one person before Treyarch will even look at it. Does that mean 300 reports from one user, or 300 reports by different people? I called to find out and they couldn't even tell me.

You have two ways to report people, either on the PSN network or on the game itself. I wish the PSN would act as quickly to some of the messages people get as they do when someone has hacked the game. You report people with the evidence you have in messages and then a week or so later you still see them in game lobbies.

The PSN or the game publisher should at least let you know whether your report was resolved. I've had to help one of my friends because their account was hacked and I called PSN on their behalf and they couldn't let me know what was going on or what punishment would done.

These companies need to help with online bulling by being honest and letting people know the outcomes. They should give you a case number or something so you know what the status is instead of keeping us in the dark. It would protect the company and let people know that when they report abuse it is dealt with the importance of someone hacking your PSN account. **ggusmc**, via email

Geez, ggusmc, sounds like you get into some pretty serious online rivalries. Like, the stuff of stalking nightmares.

We've often wondered how Treyarch and other companies handle complaints about online play. For every one legitimate problem like your mate's hacking episode, we imagine there are 50 more that are nothing but sore losers trying to get their betters in trouble, or attempts

to bust out some identity theft. God knows what sort of manpower you'd need at a help desk to sort all that crap out.

But though what you're describing is time and money consuming, you're right, it has to be in place. We'll forward on your comments to every dev we interview in the hopes that online will be made into a welcoming space – not the f-bombed Thunderdome apocalypse that it can be today.

CRAPCOM?

Hi awesome people,

So I just watched the new *Resident Evil* movie and I wanted to share my thoughts. We have all seen game to movie tie-ins but I wanted to say that I think that the *Resident Evil* franchise could use a little more 'movie to game tie-in'.

I would love to play as Alice and as I play through *Resident Evil 6* I have to say that I think the makers of the films have a better grasp of the entire

franchise than the makers of the game at this point.

Knowing that the director of the films and star Milla Jovovich are fans of the original games really shows. In short the movies are still fun... the games need 'something' in my opinion. They need to be fresher. Newer. Whatever...

It seems like the *Resident Evil*, like so many franchises are continually trying to RECREATE rather than GROW.

Love all your work been buying since the first issues. As a NZ reader I don't know if you're still doing 'demo discs' but I look forward to their return.

Ben Shearer, via email

Hey, Ben. We agree with exactly half of the contents of your letter. We're neither here nor there on the *Resident Evil* movies – though glimpsing a Licker in the first *Resi* movie gave us an inexplicable thrill – but we're glad you're into it, and you have some good ideas.

We do, however, think you're spot on about *Resident Evil 6* being a game that recreated, rather than grew. It's sad to say it, but Japanese games development in general has fallen behind with the times. *RE6* probably felt like a big shake-up to Japanese audiences, but a lot of its mechanics just felt like par for the course to Western gamers. *Mercenaries* is still rad, though.

Here's hoping *Resi 7* is the one that'll put Capcom on the forefront of innovation, as once was the always case.

Cuttings

► **Wii-ly?**

I'm surprised your review of *Sports Champions 2* didn't say *Wii Sports* with better graphics.... **Troy Goldner**, via Facebook

It's a bit better than that, surely?

► **Not on our watch**

Australia can't miss out again like it does everything. **Gary Matthews**, via Facebook

GTA: San Andreas should be on the PSN right about... now.

► **Out of the ordinary**

Yes. It's awesome. It requires patience and has a good story. It isn't just run in there and 'blamm, blamm, blamm.' **Andrew Maddock**, via Facebook

Guess the game, readers!

► **TMI**

It's been 13 months since the first *The Last of Us* trailer. That's a long time to have an erection. **Timothy Justice**, via email

That honestly sounds very uncomfortable.

► **Pleasure/Pain**

The 3D made me feel ill, but I'd see it again for sure. **Zac Woodward**, via email

That could be, er, messy.

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on

facebook.

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Paul Bowditch

Uncharted: Fight For Fortune

"A surprisingly good card game."



Shannon McKernan

Yakuza 4

"I like to take a walk down a road of weirdness."



Jake Robertson

Hitman: Absolution

"One of the most beautiful games I've ever seen."



Daniel Hanson

Far Cry 3

"When you think you're in control: tiger! Or bear!"

▼ Caption This

You put the words to the screen. Simple.



"This sword is harder to get than Skyrim DLC."

Andrew William goes beyond the game to, er, other games.

in coming

This Month

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THE PITCH

A true, canonical sequel to one of the greatest films of all time with some of the original talent in front of and behind the camera

Aliens: Colonial Marines

On a bughunt, don't Xeno?

It's been 26 years since James Cameron's *Aliens* first came out, and it – or at least the name – has remained in public consciousness ever since. Despite two film sequels, lots of games (including most recently *Aliens vs. Predator*), none has really come close to matching the pace and terror of tackling an acid-for-blood alien species as a meatbag marine.

Gearbox wants to recreate the feeling of dread that the movie exuded so well: the slow march into horror and some pretty sweet sci-fi moments as well. The Texan developer is doing its best to put you in the film's iconic locations so you can pore over them for yourself, reproducing the setting and feel of the movie whilst also making a sequel that's going to be canon in the *Aliens* universe: everything that happens here has to be acknowledged in any future movies or games. Gearbox is treating this with deference – a wise step. But while they have the tone right for the most part, the game feels lacking and a little scrappy.

The tone is set from the very beginning, James Horner's score over the top of a well-directed and snappy sequence that

introduces the main characters and timeline. Set 17 weeks after the end of *Aliens*, a pre-recorded message from a bandaged Hicks (voiced by Michael Biehn) has been broadcast, and you're there to find out what happened. You are Corporal Winter, and along with a typically gruff but well-intentioned Captain (calling all "chicks and dicks" to service after an undisclosed amount of time in hypersleep, and rousing crew with the line of "we don't leave Marines behind") you're soon sent on board the Sulaco to retrieve the flight recorder. Yes, the Sulaco's back, and we're not sure why.

We've seen this section before, but it's one of the best intros to a movie-licensed game in, well, ever. The ship's been torn to shreds, flashing lights adding a bright hue to otherwise sterile metal plating. You'll walk past the lockers of all the crew from the Sulaco, then into the hangar where Ripley had her last stand with the alien Queen. Frankly, it's spooky stepping on board the derelict ship, and the bottom half of Bishop – along with the white goop that made up his innards – still lies across the decking. Spattered alien blood has left curious holes in the metal.





“In the background a child calls for her mother – turns out it’s Newt”

That mission soon goes fubar, and the umbilical cord connecting your own ship, the Sephora, to the Sulaco is ruptured. After a frantic escape that threatens to suck you into the vacuum of space our demo cuts forward to the fourth mission and we’re on LV-426 and running towards Hadley’s Hope.

If you’re curious to know why the site that was nuked is still in one piece, so are we. It’s not something that was answered during our time with the game. However, you get the feeling straight away that the planet is a real hellhole. Comets stream down through the atmosphere, lightning puts cracks in the sky that’s soaked in reds and purples. The landscape is jutting rocks and rough valleys, something more foreign than a Martian landscape.

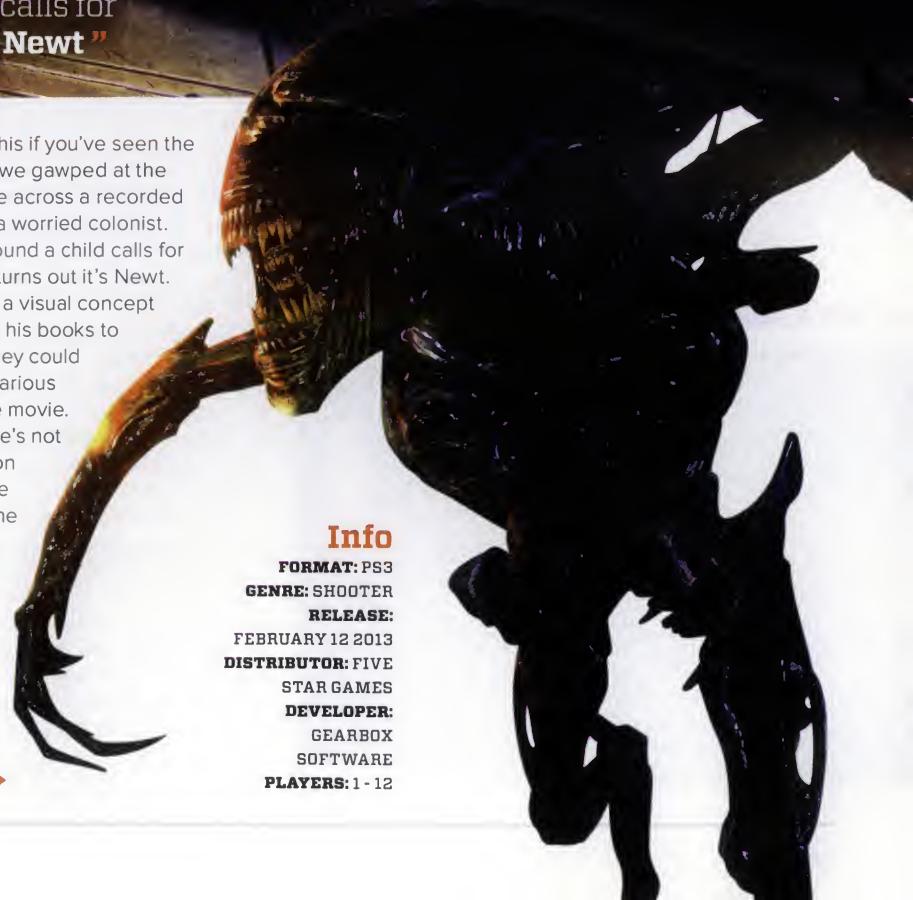
Once we’re inside the colony things aren’t much better. Panels have been stripped off the walls, the lights flicker and loose cabling tumbles down like gutted intestines. It’s clear that this place has seen something gruesome. Of course,

you know all this if you’ve seen the movie, but as we gawped at the mess we came across a recorded phone call of a worried colonist. In the background a child calls for her mother – turns out it’s Newt.

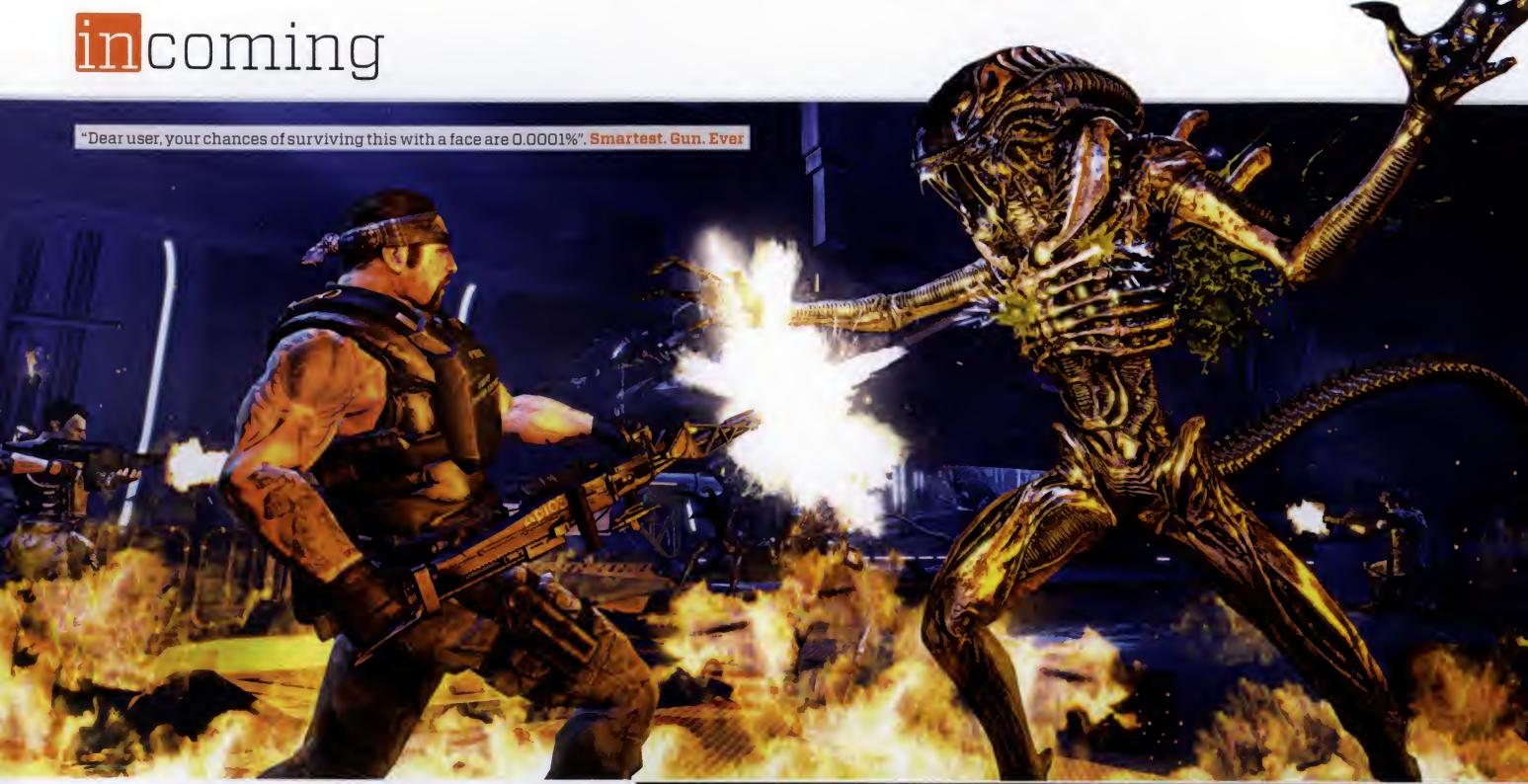
Syd Mead, a visual concept artist, opened his books to Gearbox so they could recreate the various settings of the movie. As an aside, he’s not the only person from the movie to work with the team, as at this stage we know that both Lance Henriksen and Biehn have given their likenesses and voice ►

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: FEBRUARY 12 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: FIVE STAR GAMES
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1-12



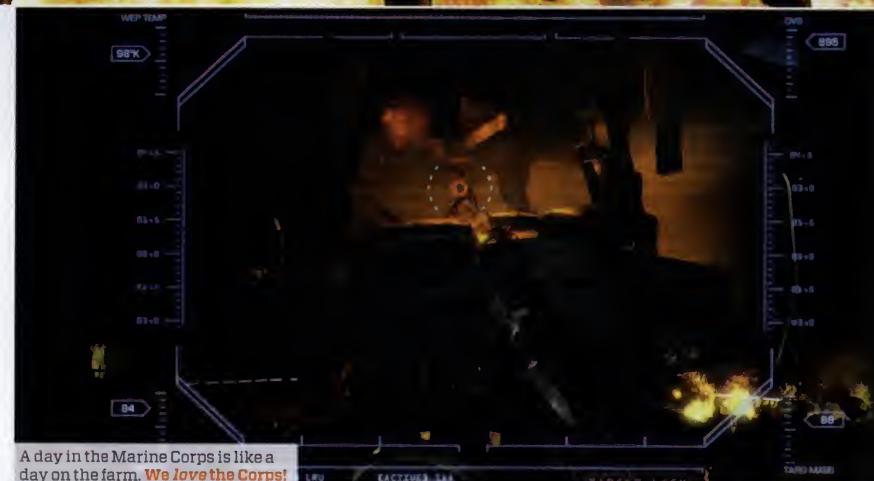
"Dear user, your chances of surviving this with a face are 0.0001%. **Smartest. Gun. Ever**"



to the game. Henriksen in particular is a fully-formed Bishop in your team. Like the Terminator, he's just one unit of a certain model, made on a production line, so it makes sense that another Bishop would be present, and it's both cool and weird seeing him run amongst the Marines.

While Mead was the conceptual artist for the Sulaco, Ron Cobb was responsible for Hadley's Hope. We can't confirm if Cobb was as involved with *Colonial Marines* as Mead, but the interior of the colony feels right, and the environment along with a particular gameplay mechanic sets the tension: you can only hold a motion tracker or a gun, not both at the same time. Walking down a corridor with the flickering pulse of the sonar and red dots of organic target as they appear is hair-raising stuff. We were soon thinking pretty carefully about where we were going to point our gun, and wondering where the aliens were coming from as the motion tracker and its heart-raising beeping increased.

The first firefight was a mess inside the tight confines of the colony, with the fizzy spray of pulse rifle bullets and frantic shotgun blasts. Aliens go skittering around corners and creep out of tight



"It's spooky stepping on board the derelict ship, and the bottom half of Bishop **still lies across the decking"**

gaps – yes, out of the walls – and whip around corners, the tip of their tails giving away the direction they've gone in.

Disappointingly, the second and third battles felt perfunctory. The aliens themselves are pretty quick, but some run upright with their arms spread which looks kinda weird. Once they get close enough, an on-screen prompt butts them away and the terror is diffused. If you're expecting gushes of alien blood to burn holes in the environment or armour, forget it. The only way we took damage was from a nasty swipe, and we were expecting them to be more ferocious.

Still, the tone of the weaponry is spot on. Pulse rifles tear through ammo, and the flickering number of rounds displayed on the gun itself worryingly disappears after a quick squirt on the trigger. Shotguns have a meaty blast to them, as you'd expect, and smart guns – basically a mobile sentry gun – automatically target xenomorphs. Once they're empty they can't be refilled, so their abilities won't destroy the tension.

Sentry guns are a welcome sight, and the first time you come across them they're in the hallway where the marines in the movie set them up in a battle against the aliens. Interestingly, we retrieved them from one corridor to place at a rudimentary command post and could lay them pretty much anywhere we wanted, although a large, yellow outline signposted the best spot for them. Afterwards we could pick the guns back up, hinting that there's some tactical options for their usage.

Under the colony the aliens' secreted resin has taken over entire sections, changing the landscape from cold metal to wet, glistening browns. It's hard not to feel a little uncomfortable the first time you come across it.

So while all the elements set the tone, atmosphere-shattering reminders you're in a game aren't far behind. Kills earn XP, and the levelling system is shared between single and multi-player. Annoyingly, the rewards we earned ka-chinged onto the screen while the game



"Let's go marines, asses 'n' elbows!"



was in motion; it's a meta moment and it broke the spell of feeling like we were skulking round a ruined colony.

However, that explains why you start with only 40 bullets in your pulse rifle compared to the 99 in the film. We suppose gamey concessions like this have been implanted for a reward structure, but it's at the expense of authenticity to the movie that in other ways *Colonial Marines* does far better than anything that's come before it. Then there are special collectibles, 'legendary' guns to pick up. They're staples of all games, but here they feel so out of place, betraying the spirit once more.

The AI also needs some work as characters stumble around the environments, rigid in their programming. Areas have to be cleared before doors can be opened, and in one section an NPC 'knew' there was a rogue alien lurking even though it wasn't on the radar. After a clumsy search we were free to go on – but only when our AI-controlled teammate opened the door for us. We were perfectly capable of punching the buttons, and we even had a (cutscene-only) arc welder to remove any offending barriers. Insultingly, a graphical glitch meant that our AI buddy's weapon, which was mounted and strapped to his waist, blinked out of existence while he was unlocking the door, and magically reappeared once the animation was over.

Our demo ended with a brief glimpse

at a new breed of alien, teeth bared, coming straight for our face. We're looking forward to seeing how that's going to be explained in the final game.

We only played the campaign solo, so we can only guess how two or four-player co-op affects the tension. We can only hope that like-minded humans can do a bit better than the AI, but the aliens themselves need to be more ferocious.

The kinks we saw could be ironed out by the time the full thing's released, though we're less optimistic about the reward structure that shows just how much of a game this is. At the moment, *Colonial Marines* is far from being the ultimate badass. **Paul Taylor**



MEAD MADE IT

Syd Mead is prolific, and you probably don't even know it. Apart from his work on designing the Sulaco in *Aliens*, he also worked on *Blade Runner* designing vehicles and backgrounds, as well as the still cool lightcycles in Disney's *Tron*. Unbelievably, he also designed the Johnny 5 robot that was the star of *Short Circuit*. Vehicles – both fictitious and real – were his focus. Mead's first job out of design college was working for the Ford Motor Company in their Advanced Styling Studio, but after roughly two years there he began what would be a lifetime's work in the movies, with time to design the interiors of privately-owned 747 aircraft.

They Say

"Aliens: Colonial Marines will bring new levels of bone-chilling suspense and adrenaline-filled action as an authentic addition to the renowned *Aliens* franchise canon."

We Say

Amazing fan service, and very true to the film, but the game itself is a bit lacklustre. Still, the tension's cranked right up with the steady beep of the motion tracker.

Verdict



All your favourite film locations are lovingly re-created, as are the horrid Face Huggers.

Metro: Last Light

Next stop: HELL

An old man makes shadow puppets with his hands, projecting animal silhouettes in an effort to entertain some small children. He makes a doggie, but the tikes are unimpressed.

"Do one we know!"

Having been born and reared in the subway lines beneath an irradiated, post-apocalyptic Moscow, these kids have never even seen a dog. Reflecting for a moment, the old man creates a different creature with his digits – a winged, gargoyle-like monstrosity.

"Yay! A demon!"

This one, they know. And you know it, too – you've just met one on the surface, and it nearly ate your face off.

Metro: Last Light is set around 20 years in the future, in a world where just about everything is trying to kill you. The radiation, the acid rain, the poison air, the mutants, and especially the humans: endlessly warring factions that have set up little empires amongst the old subway stations. There are the neo-commie Reds, the neo-nazi Reich, and the Order, a relatively sane military force that recently promoted you to Ranger. It's a rank that some feel you don't really deserve – partly because you're a bit of a noob, and partly because there's a good chance you've doomed the entire human race.

At the end of *Metro 2033* Artyom (you) got to choose whether or not

to launch a deadly missile strike on the Dark Ones, a race of mutants with horrifying mental powers. Most gamers chose to press the button, so the devs at 4A Games have made this 'bad end' canon.

Genocide seemed like a good idea at the time, yet it's beginning to look like Artyom made the wrong call, and that maybe, just maybe, the Dark Ones were friendly, and that making people's heads explode was just their misguided way of saying 'hello.' With his unique ability to withstand the mental probing of these neo-sapiens, Artyom is once again the only one who can resolve the crisis; either by making peace with the last surviving Dark Ones, or by exterminating them.

Either way, matters are coming to a head, as the Reich is on the verge of uncovering the fabled 'D6' bunker, a secret arms stash with enough munitions to wipe out the last few pockets of civilisation...

Beyond the dystopian, ultra-pessemistic setting, what sets *Metro: Last Light* apart is that in many ways it is a simulation. In addition to ammo, you need to watch your supply of air filters, and the charge on your torch. Above ground, your gas mask will fog up over time; a tap of **L1** will wipe away the gunk. Keeping track of all these factors makes you more invested, and more immersed in the action.

Guards who've had their jimmies rustled won't stop looking for you after a minute, *Metal Gear*-style – they'll hunt you until one of you is dead. Stab

The Pitch

Horrifying FPS mayhem in a toxic future – Mad Max with trains.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: 4A GAMES

RELEASE: MARCH 2013

PLAYERS: 1





“Tunnels are filled with spawn pods that vomit forth spiders – there’s a distinct *Aliens* vibe.”

a guard from behind, and he'll go down quickly, but minions on alert will have their adrenaline pumping, and will soak up more bullets. Every monster type, from giant scorpions to giant rats, has its own AI system – they'll hunt in packs, and try to scurry up walls to outflank you.

The moving parts of every gun are modelled, and while they don't jam (that would be sadistic), they do overheat. The signature weapon of the Metro series, the 'Bastard Gun',

has a box magazine which gives you a direct view of your ammo; each bullet is rendered individually, the dull brass of every casing lit up by the custom lighting engine. This attention to detail manifests everywhere – control panels aren't flat textures, but arrays of meticulously sculpted knobs. Light bulbs are modelled right down to the arcs of their filament.

The story unfolds both overground and underground, and

Night Watch

Post-apocalyptic tales from Russia and the old Eastern Bloc countries have a very different vibe to the sci-fi of the West. Genocide, concentration camps, and mass starvation aren't abstract things they've read about in books: they're nightmares they've lived through – and this comes across in their games. *Metro: Last Light* is far, far scarier and way, way more depressing than, say, *Fallout: New Vegas*.

levels offer multiple paths, with plenty of opportunities for stealth kills. Ammo is scarce: a pure run-and-gun strategy is inadvisable.

While the overall game structure is linear, a better word might be 'claustrophobic.' A typical scene sees you trapped in a malfunctioning lift, with hissing arachnids swarming around on all sides. Another set piece has you stealth your way out of a Reich prison that's rigged to fill with poison gas if you're detected. Winding, narrow tunnels are filled with spawn pods that curl open and vomit forth spiders as you pass – there's a distinct *Aliens* vibe.

Perhaps you've seen the E3 demo footage where Artyom and an AI buddy sneak through a Nazi rally, in one long continuous camera zoom through a grim, tubular chamber. There are other scenes like this, and they all make a subtle point: The people in the Metro world aren't imprisoned by subway walls, but rather by their own ideology, fear, and greed.

Other notable game features include action set pieces on moving trains, mind-bending psychic flashbacks, packs of deformed giant rats, and a sexy sniper lady who we suspect is going to help Artyom repopulate the Earth. We're keeping an eye on *Metro: Last Light* – it has the potential to be something special.  **James Cotttee**

Some mutants need darkness to survive. "Bright light!"

They Say

"It's the rough edges that make *Metro* the unique experience that it is. The fact that you have to pump the gun yourself, you have to wipe the mask, and then you have to do the filter and manage that and you have your lighter... it's all those elements that make the experience unique and desirable."

We Say

It's heartening that developers are waking up to the fact that a shooter needs a rocking story to be truly immersive. Assuming the port from PC to PS3 goes smoothly, this could be a surprise hit.

Verdict



You sought out the land where **demons spew lava**. What where you expecting: a grease down and a shiatsu?



Dark Souls II

Harder than a coffin nail?

Dark Souls was the sort of game you loved to death, or hated to death. Either way you always died, repeatedly, and the game didn't care. Early reports suggest that *Dark Souls II* will not be quite so brutal, but it will take a rather large graphical leap beyond its functionally pretty predecessor.

How good does it look? Let's just say that *Watch Dogs* and *Star Wars 1313* have a run for their money; the visuals in its launch trailer aren't far removed from in-game engine.

Wanton sexiness is one thing, but veterans may still be concerned about who is at the reins of this. Hidetaka Miyazaki, director of *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls*, will not be working on the development of *Dark Souls II*. He's stepped back from either a directing

or producing role, and seems content to have his name attached under the title 'supervisor'. Developmental decisions will be out of his hands, but he'll be there to push the new team leaders forward and to ensure they put out a timely, bug-free sequel. You'd think that's what they should be aiming to achieve anyway, but yeah, apparently not.

The 'new team', so to speak, is made up of veteran From Software directors Tomohiro Shibuya and Yui Tanimura. Shibuya is an interesting addition as he has experience in faster-paced action games. The move to have these two directors replace Miyazaki was a company decision made by both From Software and Namco Bandai Games to help move the series forward in a fresh

The Pitch

The death of you, or the series, too?

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION RPG

EXPECTED RELEASE:

TBA 2013

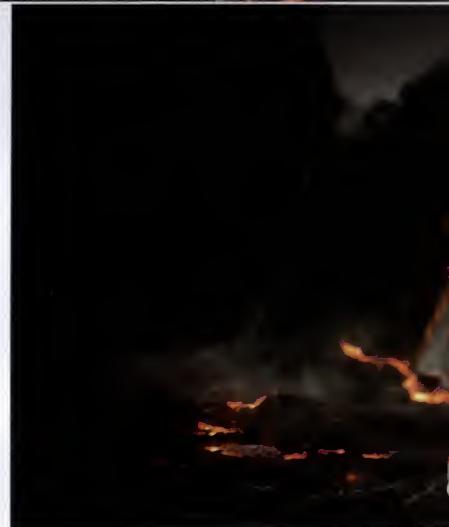
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: FROM

SOFTWARE

PLAYERS: 1 - TBA



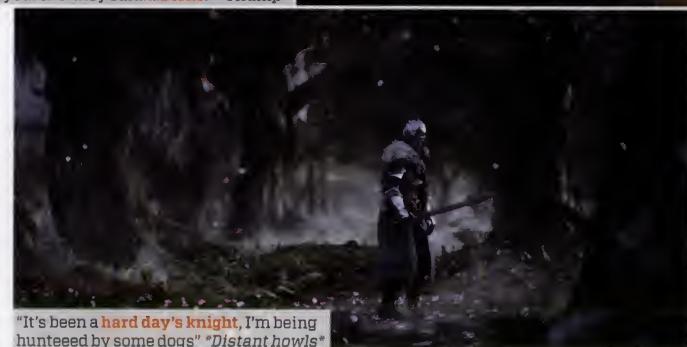
“Wanton sexiness is one thing, but veterans may still be concerned about who is at the reins of this.”

direction. If change frightens you, you're not alone. But take heart in this consolation prize: Miyazaki is still very much in the industry and working on a new project of his own.

Unlike the transition from *Demon's Souls* to *Dark Souls*, *Dark Souls II* will be a bona fide direct sequel. You can expect an open world of roughly the same size as last time, but more dense with content (read: death around every corner). The amount of staff working on creature creation has basically doubled since the last title, which means we're all screwed. Interestingly, we will not be returning to Londran. The name of the new world is a bit of a spoiler, apparently, so you're just going to have to analyse the trailers for clues. Or not.



Are you a **dragon** or **wyvern** suffering from unexplained **heartburn**? We'll reveal the source of it after this commercial break



“It’s been a **hard day’s knight**, I’m being hunted by some dogs” **Distant howls**

For those of you who tried to play *Dark Souls*, but rage-quit when you had no freakin' idea what to do, you might want to give this sequel a chance. The two new directors express a desire to make certain aspects of the game less tormenting for the player, namely by making the Covenant system, the story and the in-game messaging system much more accessible. The game is sitting at a mere 25 per cent completion, but Shibuya is talking about limiting your options in the early stages of the game, possibly as an extended tutorial, before chucking your candy-ass into the deep-end of full *Dark Souls* purgatory. There's even talk of the game's difficulty shifting dynamically to suit whoever is at the controls.

Purists drinking a beverage may have done a spit-take all over the magazine just now, and rightly so. The *Dark Souls* series' defining feature was its uncompromising difficulty. We understand that a good franchise is one that evolves, but our spider-sense is telling us that From Software may be tweaking the one thing it really shouldn't.

“The entire development team

is striving to make *Dark Souls II* an experience that is fresh while not forsaking its roots in presenting players with challenging gameplay,” insists Shibuya. “Our goal is to surprise and delight our fans with new experiences and plot twists while enticing new players to join our dark journey.”

Dark Souls II is a long way off (From Software seems uncertain if they'll even make 2013) but we'll be watching it with wary eyes. Please don't think us unfair, From Software – your insta-death mechanics are responsible for our near-constant paranoia. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

“The game doesn’t accept compromise, and neither do the brilliant people at From Software who will test their own tenacity as well as that of gamers in delivering us another gaming landmark.”

We Say

Not sure if PR trap laced with bullshit.

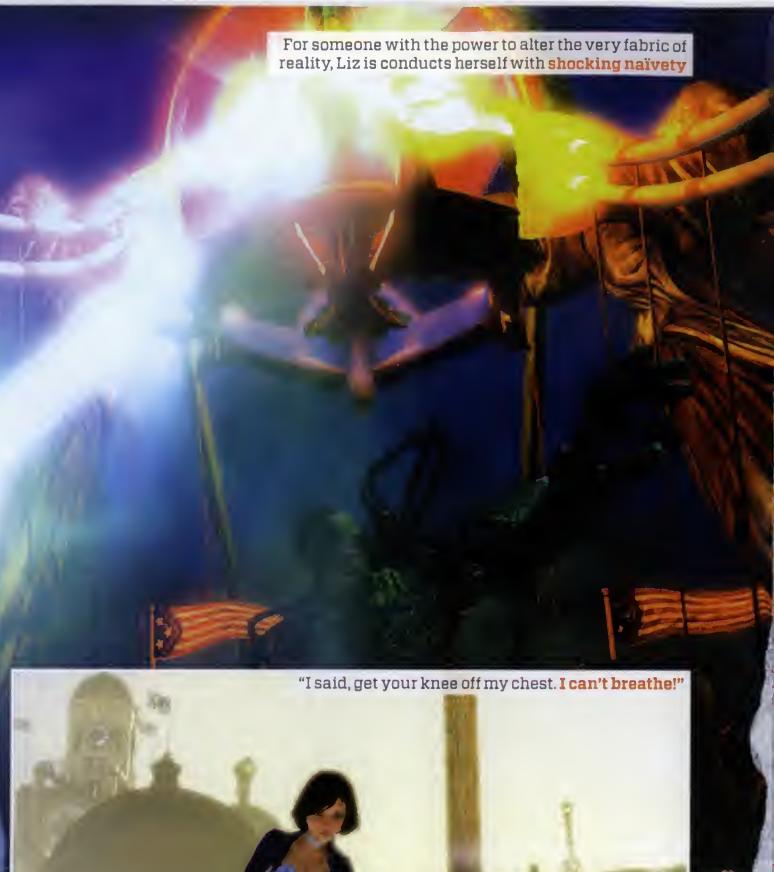
Verdict



BioShock Infinite

Elizabethan drama

For someone with the power to alter the very fabric of reality, Liz is conducts herself with **shocking naivety**

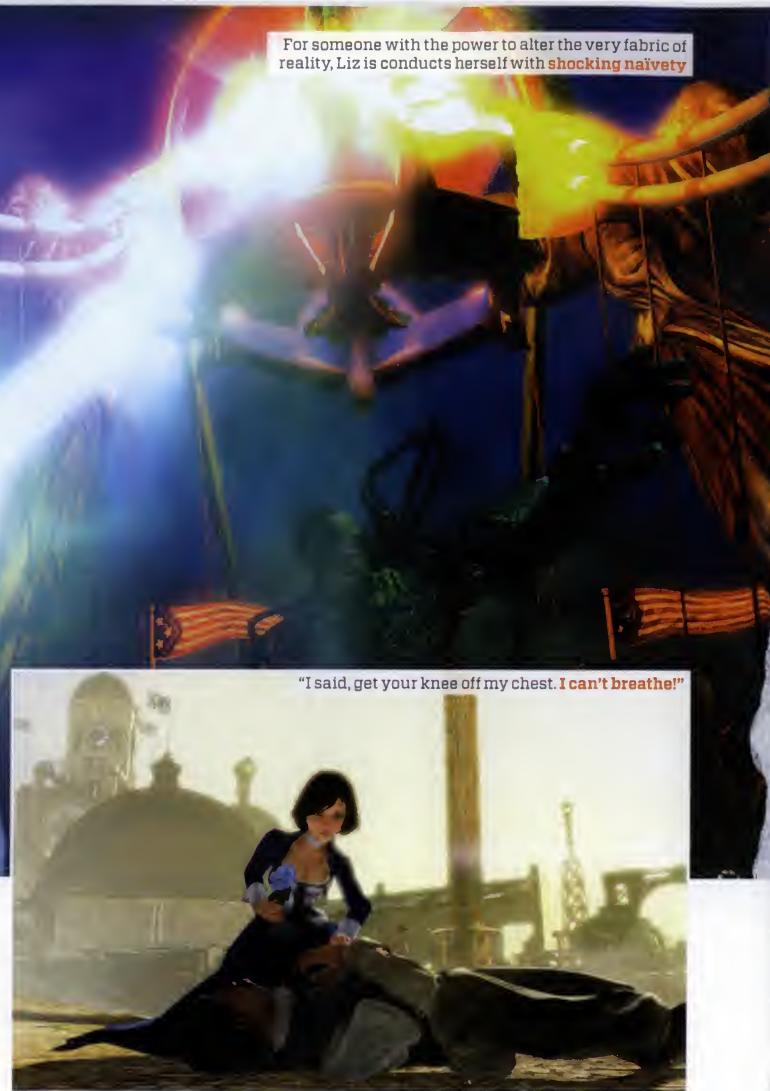


Booker DeWitt, former Pinkerton agent, and protagonist of *BioShock Infinite*, is a man on a mission. Burdened with a crushing debt accrued at the card table, he has been instructed to go to Columbia – the cloud-borne utopia – and abscond with a young woman held prisoner there.

"Bring us the girl and wipe away the debt." A simple enough imperative for a man like DeWitt, but the question remains: Just who is this girl?

Her name is Elizabeth. She is twenty years old, strikingly beautiful, and endearingly childlike. She has been imprisoned in Columbia for more than a decade, though for what reason we can't say. When Booker arrives bearing the key to her gilded cage, she and he join forces, working together to escape the city that wants to destroy them.

According to designer Ken Levine, Elizabeth is the "soul" of *BioShock Infinite*. The bond she forms with Booker – and by extension, the player – forms the emotional core of the narrative Levine and his team



at Irrational have constructed. She has been designed from the ground up to be relatable, empathetic – *human*.

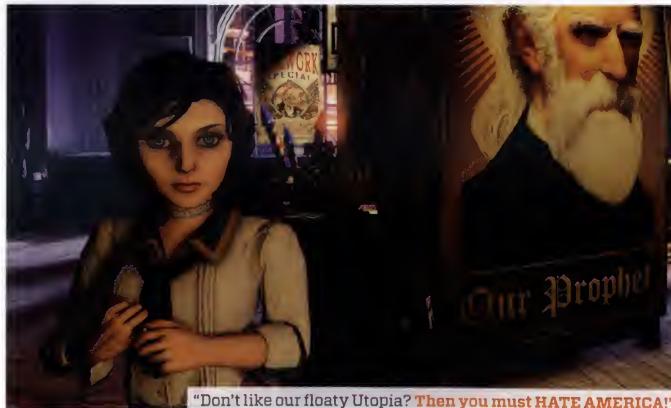
Unlike most AI companions, Elizabeth is not an oblivious automaton incapable of responding to events unfolding right in front of her freakishly big eyes. She lives in this world, is a part of it, and reacts to it accordingly. In Levine's words, she is always looking for something cool to do, something to amuse, enlighten, or assist the player.

In one early scene, for example, she dons a novelty Abe Lincoln mask and begins reciting the Gettysburg Address: "Four score and seven years ago..." It's adorable, and indicative of the effort Irrational has invested in bringing this character to life. Elizabeth is not just some dead-eyed bot – she has personality.

And that's not all she has. Possessed of mysterious supernatural powers, Elizabeth can manipulate the fabric of space-time itself and is capable of summoning ammunition, weapons, objects, and even living beings at whim. This makes her a valuable ally in a firefight, but it comes with a cost: her physical well-being. Push her too hard and she will suffer. But is it worth it...?

That's a question for you to ponder, and if Ken Levine has his way, the answer won't come easy. But then, since when has *BioShock* ever been about easy answers?

— Dan Staines



They Say

"*BioShock Infinite* has been our sole focus for the last four years, and we can't wait for fans to get their hands on it."

We Say

...which is why it's been delayed again, this time all the way to March. No worries, though: with a game this ambitious, we're more than happy to wait a few extra weeks for release day.

Verdict





Crysis 3

Playing cyber cupid

The humble bow with matching arrow accessory is the 'In' protagonist weapon to have this season. Hunting is this generation's Hansel (so hot right now).

But where Lara, Connor and that lass from the *Hunger Games* get their Robin Hood on with low-tech recurves, they're all playing second fiddle to Prophet's next-gen death-flinger in *Crysis 3*. Bloody thing looks like it requires a six month course to operate and could bulls-eye a Mars rover on a clear day.

We got hands on with the predator bow and used it just as Crytek prescribed: to assess, adapt and attack. More specifically, we moved in undetected, tagged our enemies with your nanosuit visor, adapted our nanosuit powers to the situation, and then turned people into pincushions. We love that the bow's ability to be fired from cloaking is balanced by its low rate of fire, and the fact that it is semi-useless when you're under pressure. Seems Prophet can't

aim worth a damn when bullets are pinging off his face. Rookie.

The fact that we found ourselves favouring it more than the Typhoon, an assault rifle that fires 500 rounds a second, is a testament to how inherently cool and useful the predator bow is. It only gets better when you factor in its different ammo types, the ability to tailor its draw characteristics, and the way it gels with the rejigged perk system in *Crysis 3*.

Speaking of improvements, the enemy AI has been tightened up since *Crysis 2*. Crytek has three tiers in the way the AI reacts to you in the environment making them far less predictable. Expecting them to hunt you in the same situation in the same manner is to expect a bullet in your arse and a checkpoint reload.

If Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli is to be believed, while playing *Crysis 3* graphics whores will have an unbearable urge to lick their televisions. So confident is he that this will be the sexiest looking game ever released on PS3 (or 'that other console') he's thrown down the gauntlet on every current-gen title out there, past, present or near-future.

"*Crysis 3* is absolutely maxing out the consoles," he boasts. "There is absolutely not even one per cent left. No game will ever look technically better than *Crysis 3* on these consoles, flat out". From what we saw, Crytek is well on the way to winning that technological war. Call us worrywarts, but we're curbing our enthusiasm until we play this in final form. Any multi-platform title aiming to bend the limits of a console has the potential to misfire. Expect a review soon. **Adam Mathew**

The Pitch

New age cybernetics, dark age arrow deaths

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
EXPECTED RELEASE: FEBRUARY 21 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: CRYTEK
PLAYERS: 1-12



They Say

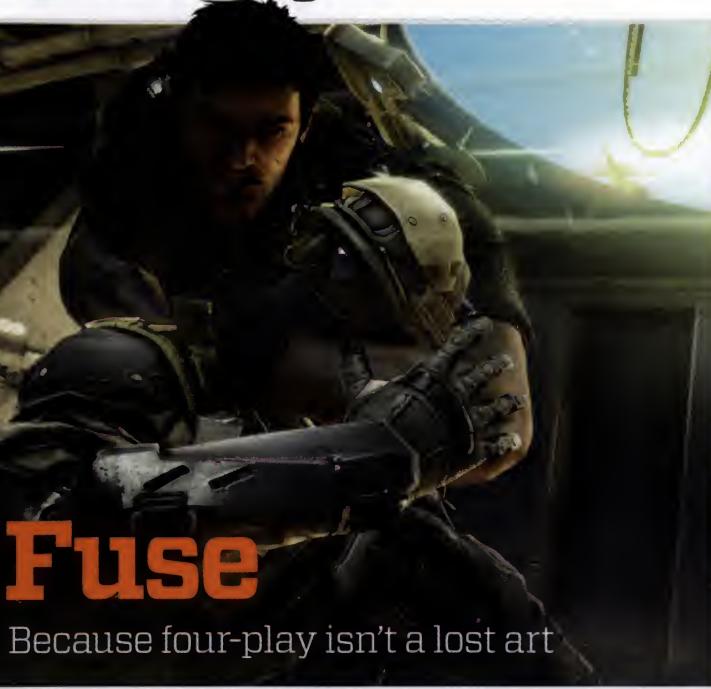
"[In the jungle sections of New York you'll say] yeah, it's hot, it's humid, it's gross, it's disgusting...[we want you to] think about the Vietnam war and how the soldiers felt."

We Say

We could never use the word 'disgusting' in relation to these visuals. But yes, we were getting flashbacks of Charlie. In the trees...

Verdict





Fuse

Because four-play isn't a lost art

If you're one of those 'judge a book by its cover types' who hated on *BioShock Infinite*, the packaging of Insomniac's latest will affect your finicky purchasing habits so negatively EA may as well have called it *Refuse*.

It slaps its quartet of protagonists against a garish, Fanta-advertisement orgy of orange, and then crops everybody off at the chin. So yeah, that's your *Fuse* review, sorted. Terrible game. Please turn to the next page.

Alright, that should have filtered out all the shallow whingers. *Good*. Now we can give all of you awesome, sensible folk our real impressions: *Fuse* is great and worth planning a pre-order for.

Insomniac is heavily gearing this towards teamwork, outfitting each of its four class-based characters with unique alien weapons and special powers that are dangerous when used by themselves, but



Cover skills 101: Incoming super-heated metal has right of way



TRUFAX: *Fuse* was originally called *OverOrange: The Oranging*

utterly lethal when combined.

Being a Nigel-no-friends, we had to be content with basically being a co-op buddy to ourselves, switching between characters on the fly when things got too hairy. We wouldn't exactly call it 'quick-swapping', because doing it requires one thumb on the SixAxis' least used button, **SELECT**, to trigger the 'switch' menu. The battle won't pause as you take a second or two to see which of your AI buddies is available for a body-snatch, and then a corresponding face button whisks you away to inhabit them. That delay proved to be a source of death in a few tight spots.

Beyond that, *Fuse* ticks off all the boxes off: the sticky cover system is fluid, and each character's weapons and individual progression trees make them feel satisfactorily unique. Mixing all of those tools to make your team greater than the sum of its parts (and to earn XP faster) is a lot of fun in four player co-op. It's also imperative for staying alive. Your average grunt comes with a decent life bar and an elemental resistance that might make him an annoying bullet-sponge for one *Fuse* member's gun, but quick meat for another. Strategies have to be formulated quickly, especially when the flamethrower mechs appear and you can't find the sprint button. If it was in the code we played, they hid it well.

Another feature of particular interest is the recently unveiled Echelon mode that promotes competitive co-op – helping your mates just enough to survive the wave, but then stealing all of the loot that spews out of their kills. Needless to say, this is relevant to our interests. Bring on March, because we can't wait to go trollin' with the homies.

Adam Mathew



Behold, our black hole son. He'll wash away the pain



And that's why mum told you never microwave your grenades

They Say

"*MI: Ghost Protocol* served as the inspiration (in particular, the wit, the espionage, and the exotic locations), as did *District 9* (whacked out weapons)."

We Say

That sounds like the best fusion since chips and gravy.

Verdict



God of War: Ascension

Who let the Gods out?



It was pretty strange the first time we spawned into *GoW: Ascension*'s beefcake battle royale with cheese. Five games worth of inhabiting the unstoppable Kratos had made us super cocky, but there was still that lingering doubt: would facing another human-controlled lackey of Ares (or 'Godsbody') create a case of an immovable object meeting an irresistible force?

Sweet Zeus' beard, no! We dominated. Using all of our well-honed *GoW* combat tactics – dodging, launching, grappling, and hacking harder than Hugh Jackman in *Swordfish* – we dispensed Old Testament wrath to all-comers. Any concerns we started to have about character balancing soon eroded when our demo wore on and our foes got worthier and wiser to our tricks.

Of the four Gods available to serve in the final game, we were kept restricted to Ares (big on physical attacks and offense) and Zeus (better at range and with magic). Switching that allegiance is super easy to do in the lobby and you can lose hours outfitting your baldy with armour bits and different skull-crackers. Comparing stat boosts/decreases of these level-capped items is a cinch and there's a tonne of



them to unlock by meeting mini-mission objectives. The more seagull among you may also score sweet loot during a brawl. That means you'll have to turn your back to open a chest, which is usually when your own chest gets ripped open in a blood-soaked kill animation.

The sneakiest murderers will also turn the fixed camera to their advantage. Many a time we sat well south of a three person fight, waiting to see which pickups were spawning beyond our victim's view, or we'd just wait for their health bars to drop. It was then a matter of sprinting in and unleashing our biggest area of attack magic to steal some kills. Blind-spot campers: we're coining the phrase now.

It's clear that Santa Monica Studios is very much aware of that trick; the sections of the arena furthest away from 'the camera man' are mostly fenced in; the more camera shy areas are lined with pitfalls. Be that as it may, the danger of being quick-booted to your death is worth risking for the ability to lurk south of centre-stage like an all-seeing vulture.

Going into this we were fairly dubious about *Ascension*'s multiplayer, but it's truly grown on us. Like the best multiplayer games of its kind, it's fast, well-balanced, tactical and the level/loot system screams longevity. As far as side-diversion events go, this could be anything but quick-time.

Adam Mathew

The Pitch

Our kind of God squad

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MARCH 14 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: SANTA

MONICA STUDIOS

PLAYERS: 1-8



Paaaaaanch. Credit: D. Staines

They Say

"Multiplayer levels are broken out into two categories – larger maps, which feature big open environments, and more compact Arenas which intensify the action and test your reflexes."

We Say

By the gods, this looks truly great.

Verdict



Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel

Taking the two masks to task



The Pitch

Big guns, zero sympathy for the devil

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MARCH 29 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-2

There are two things you can count on from any Visceral Games production: freaky babies (demon or necro, take your pick) and limbs-a-go-go dismemberment. Obviously the former couldn't be in *Devil's Cartel* due to its serious world setting, but the latter made the cut in a very big way (as dismemberment often does).

Wasting bad guys earns you points that engorge your rather self-explanatory Overkill meter. Headshots pump it up quicker, as do co-op moves like nailing the same guy (with your guns) and laying suppressing fire to enable a team mate's flank will impress the meter also.

When your bloodlust reaches its

zenith you can tap a shoulder button to enter a hazy, crazy state that will take your murderousness to the maxxreme. Temporarily invincible, your pain output becomes that of *Doom*'s Berserker Mode, or possibly *Quake*'s hallowed Quad-damage. Appendages flee torsos, craniums vaporise, explosions cause victims to flip with '80s stuntman enthusiasm, and enemy cover disintegrates faster than a prank-calling DJ's career.

It's also worth noting that Visceral is attempting to set a new standard in cover systems. Instead of running up to a wall and tapping 'attach', the prompt to grab some cover appears quite away out. One tap will send your masked maniac toward it at top speed, leaving you free to pivot about and lay down some on-the-go punishment.

Combine that worthy addition with Visceral Games' decision to move away from the 'dude-bro' tone of the last game and *Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel* is starting to look much more hit than miss.

Adam Mathew



They Say

"[Our enemies] freak out a little bit when you destroy their cover, or surprise flank them."

We Say

It's the little things we appreciate.

Verdict



Persona 4 Golden

Well look what the Vita dragged back in

The Pitch

The PS2 RPG classic back and better than ever

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: ATLUS

PLAYERS: 1

Originally released on the PS2, this RPG masterpiece is back and sporting very pretty HD visuals, added story elements and characters, additional voice acting, personas and networking capabilities that allow you to call on help from other players in dungeon battles. Yes, this is one mother of a remake.

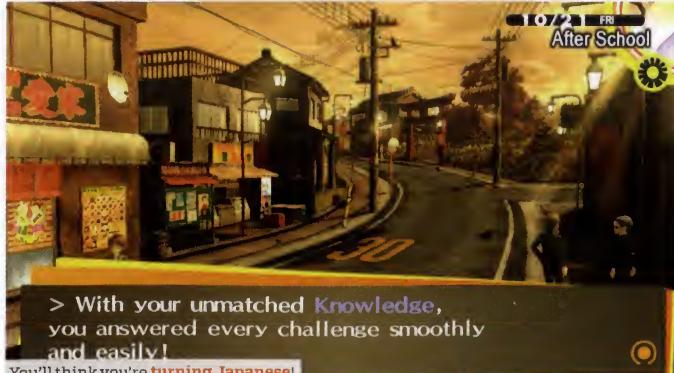
The story follows a youth as he moves to the countryside only to discover he and his friends are the only ones who can solve a horrific murder case and punish those responsible.

Aside from containing traditional RPG

elements including a turn-based battle and levelling system, this JRPG also forces you to manage a regular high school life, attend classes and earn money from a part-time job. How you choose to handle these elements affects your progress through the game with certain activities restricted to certain times of the day or week.

Along the way you'll unlock powerful spirits called Personas. These battle buddies gain experience and learn new skills as they level up, eventually transforming into more powerful forms.

With all the additions the game looks to be a worthwhile trip down nostalgia lane for those that experienced it first time around. For those that missed it, you could be in for something really special. February couldn't come any sooner. **Martin Gladstone**



They Say

Persona 4 turns golden with newfound riches! The first PS Vita title from the *Persona* team!

We Say

PS2 classic + HD visuals + stacks of new content + PS Vita = Hells yeahs!

Verdict





Dust 514

Contractual murder

The Pitch

Free space death for all

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: CCP

PLAYERS: 1 - 64

Being that *Dust 514* is going to be free-to-play – and features gun-death – our conservative estimates suggest roughly 100 percent of you will check it out at least once. Forget that *Dust* hooks into the PC game *EVE*; it has some of the best sci-fi shooting since *Starhawk*.

Though there'll be several thousands of unique ways to customise your foot soldier, CCP has set up distinct classes to ensure that one type of player can always 'rock/paper/scissors' another. For example, any vehicle being harassed by a Heavy unleashing death with a Forge Gun should call in Sniper support. Snipers eat vehicle-molesters for breakfast (figurative ones, not meaphiles, which is a lifestyle choice).

When it comes to death-dealing, *Dust*

514's arsenal packs a wallop. Swarm Launchers spew more missiles than you can kebab chunks on a Sunday morning, and there's not much the aforementioned Forge Gun can't obliterate with a full charge. All weapons are customisable and will fall into three categories: light (assault rifles and directed energy weapons), sidearms (last ditch weapons like the brain-frying Scrambler gun) and heavy (raw power beasts that really ought to be strapped onto a vehicle).

Tweaking dropsuits, vehicles and learning skills for your space merc should make *Dust 514* fairly irresistible.

Get your bib ready, because this is one free lunch you'll not want to pass on.

– Clint McCreadie

They Say

"*Dust 514* will be constantly evolving with new guns. We have a long list of ideas and players give us feedback for new content too."

We Say

The gun from *Fifth Element* and the mech from *District 9*. Do it. Do it now.

Verdict



Sportsfriends

Finally a game that lets you wave your stick around people's faces.

The Pitch

Four unique multiplayer games perfect for your next party

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

RELEASE: TBA

DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

DEVELOPER: DIE GUTE

FABRIK

PLAYERS: 2 - 7

Designed to bring people together no matter what their gaming experience, these titles have already won awards for innovation, beating the likes of *LA Noire* and *Portal 2*.

This (funded) Kickstarter project is comprised of four sports mini-games from celebrated darling indie devs. *Johann Sebastian Joust* defies game design convention because it doesn't actually have any graphics. Instead, it uses the Move controllers to imitate a 2-7 player sword fight while music plays in the

background. Competitors attempt to push their opponents so that the controller rumbles, eliminating them from the game. The slower the music the more sensitive it is to motion. Trust us there's never been a better and quicker way to meet someone before touching them.

BaraBariBall places characters on a 2D plane and equips them with attacks and the ability to jump 8 consecutive times, similar to a brawler. Points are scored by dunking a ball into the water below but are lost if the player falls in himself. If David Lynch made a port of *Super Smash Bros.* for the Atari 5200, it would look a little like *BaraBariBall*.

Super Pole Riders sees gamers pole vaulting through the air to kick a ball into their competitor's goal. The best part being you can impale your rival on the pole before waving his body around like a trophy club; just the sort of sadism you'd expect from the creator of *QWOP*.

Lastly, *Hokra* is a sort of minimalist sports game taking common elements such as passing and shooting then turning them into a game of its own. It may not be art, but we like it. – Martin Gladstone



BariBariBall: it's mental as anything

They Say

A compendium of four joyfully fun local multiplayer games for PlayStation 3.

We Say

Innovative multiplayer with unique mechanics. The public put their money where the developer's mouth is, and more power to 'em.

Verdict



30 EASIEST GAMES TO PLATINUM

When trophies were introduced, the hunt for our first platinum felt like a raid for the Ark of the Covenant – righteous, paved with the death of Nazis, and it culminated in our friend's faces melting (with jealousy). Since those early times trophies have splintered gamers into two groups: those who'll do any mindless task for an easy trinket, and those who scan the trophy 'closets' of others, looking for skeletons to ridicule. The following list should help both groups...



30

Shaun White Skateboarding

YEAR: 2010

FORMAT: PS3 DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

LAME-O-METER: A BAIL OF FAIL

 28  14  2  16hrs

Shaun White Skateboarding is stupidly easy to Platinum, but it's not the sort of game you really want to own, or even admit to having played at all. Of the 45 trophies to easily knock aside there are 12 online specific ones that are also child's play, providing you have somebody to help you. There's no one – not even tumbleweeds – waiting in these online lobbies. May we suggest a double-rental arrangement with a friend who can be disposed of later, lest they reveal the depths you've stooped to for a Platinum?



30 EASIEST GAMES TO PLATINUM

29 Eyepet

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: SCE LONDON

LAME-O-METER: MONSTER TRASH



Providing you can suffer through its vomit-inducing cuteness, *Eyepet* can easily provide you with a Platinum to boost your e-peen. Better yet, it only has one online trophy – download an item from PSN (wow, what a challenge) – and its presence in your trophy collection can be quite easily blamed on a 'younger sibling'. Better yet, an elite hacker group hell bent on discrediting you. Whichever lie you spin, it's now only a matter of dealing with your own personal guilt that will slowly gnaw at you, driving you insane like a splinter in your mind.

27 Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
LAME-O-METER: EAT LAME



What's worse than a game starring the no-longer-funny-nor-relevant Duke Nukem? A game starring a cheap, even-more-unfunny, even-less-relevant knock off of him. Screw playing this twice to unlock the hardest difficulty trophy; press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right on the difficulty screen to unlock it from the get go. Then just plough through, all the while ignoring the cover system in favour of just basic aiming 'around objects'; it'll trick the AI into thinking it can't see you (as you shoot them all dead). Fools.

28 Wanted: Weapons of Fate

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: GRIN

LAME-O-METER: DO NOT WANT



Wow. Such an ironic title for a videogame. Contrary to what GRIN's marketing department would have you believe, nobody wanted this; either on their PS3, or in their house. Even still, this is a cinch to Platinum, though it requires two runs through – once on Assassin difficulty, once on Killer – but calling either a 'difficulty' mode is stretching the term. *Wanted* has no online trophies, which means you don't have to organise a fellow trophy scavenger mate and see your own shame mirrored in their eyes.



26 Prison Break: The Conspiracy

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: ZOOTFLY

LAME-O-METER: CRIMINALLY CRAP

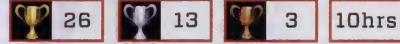


With *Prison Break* you're looking at 46 trophies, 10 hours, one playthrough, and the sort of post-traumatic stress that mimics being violated in a real-life US correctional facility. That's how good this game is. You've got zero online trophies to get here, and in terms of gameplay you can expect fistcuffs (that you can beat by being meta and punching the controller), and stealth sections (that require either patience, or some sort of kevlar coating around your television).

25 Dante's Inferno

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

LAME-O-METER: NOT DAMNING



Welcome to gaming hell, and that works on a few levels. If your friends ask you what you were doing playing this, you should always respond "because I wanted to see somebody try to muscle in on *God of War*, only to get bitchslapped". You can then high-five them at this point, if that is your custom. Honestly, *Dante's* won't seem that bad an experience on the first run. But that Platinum requires *three playthroughs*. By the end you'll want to banish this back to Satan's buttocks whence it sprung.

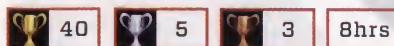


24 Where the Wild Things Are

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT:

PS3 DEVELOPER: GRIPTONITE

LAME-O-METER: HUMILIATING



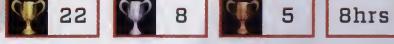
Just between you, us, and common sense, we've no idea why this 48 page book got made into a 101 minute movie. One run through on Hard (read: Easy) is all you need. This is where the mild things are folks; so much so, your "oh my kid brother played it" excuse will need to be upgraded to "my special needs guinea pig Platinumped this on my account."

**23** Sly Cooper: Thievius Raccoonus

YEAR: 2011 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH

LAME-O-METER: RESPECTABLE



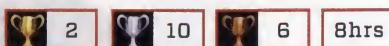
Freakin' FINALLY, a game in our list that no decent, self-respecting gamer should feel dirty about having played. *Thievius Raccoonus* is a straight-shot, one playthrough kind of game, but you'll need to collect a bunch of hidden bottles throughout. We recommend hitting up Gamefaqs.com for a guide, or have one of the many YouTube bottle video guides running on your smartphone.

21 WWE Legends of Wrestlemania

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: YUKE'S

LAME-O-METER: RESPECTABLE



The good news: you won't need to grapple long with *Legends of Wrestlemania* before it taps out like a bitch and hands over its trophies. The bad: you have to wade through a repetitive mess of a game where all the wrestlers look and move like their shitty '80s action figure counterparts. Keep in mind that these trophies can get got on any difficulty (pro tip: easy mode is easy).

LAME TROPHIES NOBODY WANTS**1** THE SIMPSONS GAME

Wow. Really, EA Redwood? You're going to reward us for pressing start to start the game? Yeah, we were going to do that anyway. Surely you could have thought of something more challenging and worthwhile for the people who blew money on your game. This isn't even using a quarter of your arse.

**2** GOD OF WAR COLLECTION

Lord Kratos is a man's man and Santa Monica Studios thinks that if you're not man-men enough to wield him skillfully you should be indelibly marked with shame. Hence the troll-worthy 'Getting My Ass Kicked' trophy that will unlock and permanently soil you as a sissy if you die enough to make the game suggest you drop the difficulty to easy.

**3** LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

If you delve into somebody's records and find 'I Swear! I Did It By Mistake', you're dealing with a pervert (or somebody who picked up the controller and thought it was inverted). Manipulating the camera up (or is that downwards?) to perve under Juliet's skirt will trip this trophy. Congratulations, all your handshake offers will now be viewed with suspicion.

**22** Mini Ninjas

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE

LAME-O-METER: A NICE SLICE



Here's another decent game that you needn't employ stealth trying to hide from those who stalk your trophies list. Yes, *Mini Ninjas* is kid-focussed and a noticeable cut below the quality seen in, say, the *Ninja Gaiden* series, but it's not without a certain charm. From the get go we'd strongly recommend you change *Mini Ninjas'* difficulty to Hard in the options and switch off the frankly irritating SixAxis motion controls while you're there. Ah, SixAxis wrist-twistin' mechanics; time and Move have truly made you the parachute pants of PlayStation gaming.

**4** SOULCALIBUR V

It's frustrating when you get online to test your mettle against other people only to have them zip around you in circles while trying to land exactly zero hits on you. Welcome to the experience-ruining idiocy that is the 'Wind of Battle' trophy. It tasks you with covering over 87,600 metres in 'character movement distance'. Note: all arenas are barely 20m x 20m. Marvellous.

**5** POP: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

'Our Little Secret' is yet another kick-in-the-balls trophy that registers when you prove to be pathetic. To earn this dirty bronze thing (and the ridicule of your peers) you need to start a game on normal difficulty, then access the options and change the game to easy. How noobish of you – expect to be seared by D.A.R.E.N.'s lasers.

30 EASIEST GAMES TO PLATINUM

19 TV Superstars

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3 DEVELOPER: SCE

CAMBRIDGE

LAME-O-METER: SUPERDESPERATE



TV Superstars isn't just the most oxymoronic sentence since 'military intelligence', it's also the name of a vacuous treasure trove of trophy treats.

One important thing note: you're much, much better off playing this with two controllers and two people locally (unless you're ambidextrous). The problem with that is you'll have to subject somebody to cruel and unusual punishment. Bring out your gaming gimp.

18 Trivial Pursuit

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3 DEVELOPER: EA

LAME-O-METER: BORED GAME EXPERT



Ah yes, you're about to embark on the very trivial pursuit that is trophy hunting in a game called *Trivial Pursuit*. How meta of you.

The trophy set here is entirely offline-based and can be completed quite easily if you're willing to cheat – and, let's face it, you are. The best way is to force the game to pause by hitting the PS button, thereby buying you time to get your Google on. You lose again, education.



17 Cars: Race-o-rama

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: TANTALUS

LAME-O-METER: LOSE FACE-O-RAMA



Welcome to racing for the pampered generation. You don't even need to take the chequered flag to progress in Cars: Crap-o-rama, a top three finish will get you a pat on the head and progression. Hell, none of the trophies are difficulty-specific either.

Alright, that's our self-righteous, old-shool indignation out of the way. Fact is this game is a goldmine for you new-school trophy-types. Expect some moderate hassles from item collection, and boredom. Lots and lots of boredom.

16 Jurassic: The Hunted

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: CAULDRON HQ

LAME-O-METER: RESPECTABLE-ISH



Sucks to say it, but you're going to have to play through this colossal triceratops pat of a game twice, once on normal, another on hard, to get all of the trophies.

To make your second run through on hard ridiculously easier, do not select New Game +. Rather, change the difficulty, start the first mission with 'Level Select' and score a freakin' laser gun waiting near the first corpse. Everything becomes extinct after that point.

15 Alone in the Dark

YEAR: 2008 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: EDEN GAMES

LAME-O-METER: PRETTY SHITTY



Thanks to a patch *Alone in the Dark* retroactively received trophy support. But whoever coded them in forgot to make them auto-disable when the player entered an infinite ammo cheat. Bam!

To do it you'll need to be in third person view with nothing equipped. Then hit \triangle , \circlearrowleft , \otimes , \circlearrowright , up, right, down, left, \triangle , \circlearrowleft , \otimes , \circlearrowright , up, left, down, right. Your new neverending supply of bullets can then be used in conjunction with the 'skip to any part of the game' option to get what you need.

A word to the wise, though, this game is glitchier than a Kazakhstani MMORPG and will freeze on you a lot. Manual save often.



TOP FIVE PLATINUM-THWARTERS



1 ROCK BAND 2

This lovely, cruisy rhythm game has a trophy that may actually cause real damage to your junkal region. 'The Bladder of Steel Award' requires players to complete an 'Endless Setlist 2' (comprised of 84 songs) without pausing or falling. Song difficulty doesn't factor into it, this is an endurance run that makes *Le Mans 24 Hours* on PS2 look like a drive around the block.



2 GRAN TURISMO 5

'Gold Standard' is a trophy that routinely sends lesser gamers mad. It requires you to get a gold medal in each race, license test, and special event. Some license tests slap you in the face and demand nothing short of perfection. Others are virtually impossible if you don't have a wheel and a pet Stig in your house. How long will it take to get? 600 hours.



3 FIGHT NIGHT CHAMPION

'Road to Glory' requires more dedication, sweat and tears than a Rocky montage. You're expected to complete 100 fights in the Online World Championship mode. Oh yeah, and disconnecting mid-fight doesn't make that match count. Cheaty McShortcut. That's a bloody long slog in anybody's book which is why practically nobody has this platinum.



4 SINGSTAR

Sometimes it's just a goddamned popularity contest with you kids. 'SingStar Celebrity' is the trophy that thwarts a lot of platinum hunters because it requires 8,000 individual people to actually give a crap and view your uploaded media. If you're not the next Justin Bieber, or you simply don't have 7,999 boosting friends, you're rather screwed here.



5 SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

Time consuming thy name is 'From C to shining C'. It asks you to rank up every fighter in the roster (35 total) to Rank C in Ranked Matches. Doing that with Ryu, Ken and all your favourites is fun. But leveling up joke character Dan Hibiki was never going to be much of a cakewalk.



14 Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs

YEAR: 2012 FORMAT: PS3

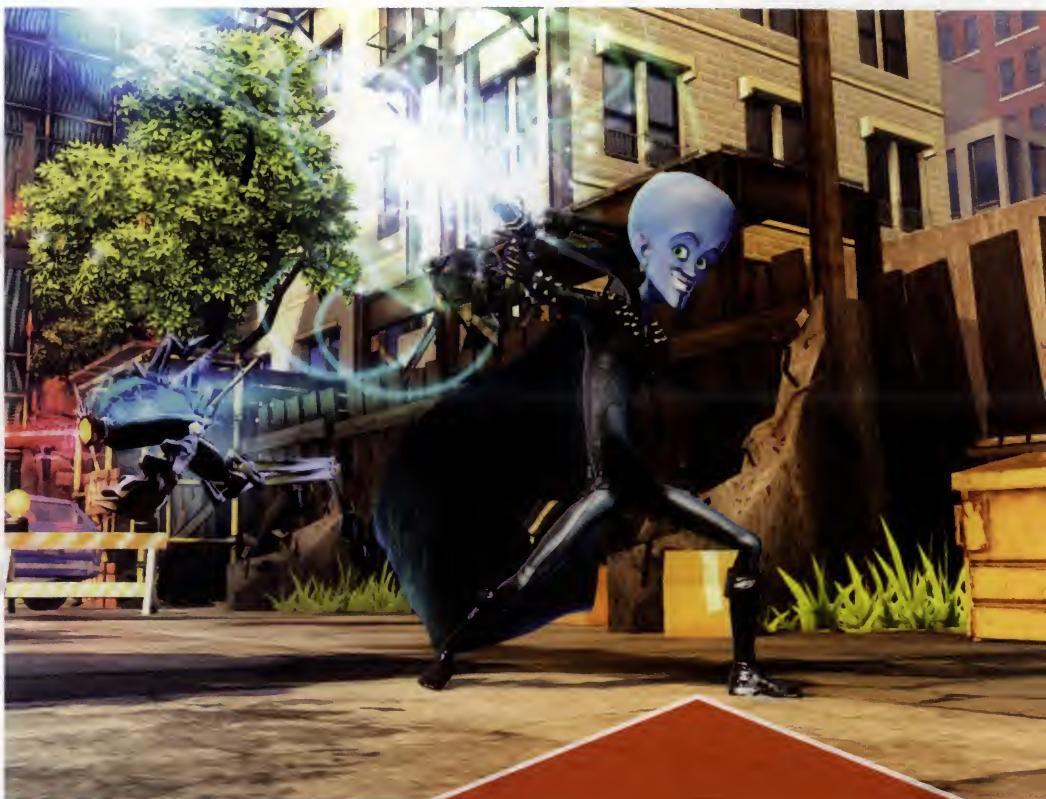
DEVELOPER: BLUESKY

LAME-O-METER: NOT COOL



The ice age and coolness have never been this further apart. If you're not a child under 10, or an archaeologist with a mammoth fixation, there's no real way to explain this game's presence on your list.

You can expect zero exploration in this linear rollercoaster ride through the house of tedium. Also, all of the 'hidden' items on the trophy list are cunningly hidden in full view. Breeze through this and never speak of it again.



13 Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

LAME-O-METER: FORECAST: FAIL HAIL



We wouldn't say there's a chance of balls here, so much as full-blown certainty. *Meatballs* is a trainwreck through and through. The controls are overly simple, the difficulty is nonexistent, and vegans will hate the visuals.

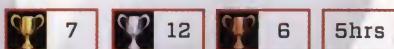
If you do wish to debase yourself hunting for accolades in this game you should know that there are a lot of collectibles, and all the trophy descriptions were written by a six-year-old. Example: *1st time get an upgrade*.

12 CSI: Fatal Conspiracy

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: TELLTALE GAMES

LAME-O-METER: SEMI-ACCEPTABLE



Spoiler: the titular 'fatal conspiracy' starts when Telltale's marketing department fools you into buying this abomination, and it ends with the death of your credibility as a gamer. Honestly, the press start screen is the toughest puzzle in *CSI: Fatal Conspiracy*. It'd have to wear ugg boots to be more casual.

The worst part of this is the way you'll need to meticulously analyse a series of on-rails areas like a trainspotter with a touch of the OCDs.

11 Megamind: Ultimate Showdown

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: THQ

LAME-O-METER: MEGALAME



Collectibles are the bane of every gamer with loose trophy morals. The good news is you needn't (mega)mind such things here as *M:US* is all platforming and requires zero kleptomania on your part. It also has a level skip function for the truly lazy who wish to go back and pick the carcass for stray trophies.

How is it as a game? Frankly, it reeks so badly of disappointment we're surprised you can't smell it through this paper. Whoever developed this didn't just phone it in; they told Steve, filling in for Ted, to get it to the disc presser by carrier pigeon.

10 Lord of the Rings: Conquest

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC

LAME-O-METER: LOTR: FAILURE



While we love our home-grown games, Pandemic Brisbane planted quite the stinkweed with *Lord of the Rings: Conquest*. In terms of irritating experiences, diehard Tolkien fans would rate it worse than getting sand in their One Ring. Grit just *ruins* movie props.

The single-player trophies, of which there are many, are a breeze. Even still you'll need a partner in crime to participate in an online ranked match. Good luck finding another player 'naturally' out in the wild.



30 EASIEST GAMES TO PLATINUM



9 Disney Pixar's Up

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3 DEVELOPER: HEAVY IRON

LAME-O-METER: RESPECT LEVELS: DOWN



Disney Pixar's Up is what happens when a great movie becomes a poor facsimile of Traveller's Tales' LEGO series. TT's flavourful 'all-ages co-op' formula has been watered down to near pissweakness here, and your ears will also be molested by what sounds like three actor soundbites stuck on repeat.

You're putting yourself through that hell for quite a few gold trophies that could be earned by quite a few species that lack opposable thumbs. The collectibles in this game are about as well hidden as an artefact in a Smithsonian display.

8 Terminator Salvation

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: GRIN

LAME-O-METER: LAME-1000



We hope you like gold, because *TS* packs nothing but. You needn't sully yourself with shitty silver, nor dirty bronze. You will, however, need to soil your gaming thumbs by wading through this rancid third-person shooter. Gameplay-wise your T-800 endoskeleton enemies are less bare-boned.

Speaking of being boned, that's how you'll feel when you finish this on normal only to realise you have to play it again on hard. Change the difficulty in the options (like we *didn't*). Replaying this is not an option.

7 SAW

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: ZOMBIE STUDIOS

LAME-O-METER: LAME MAIN



It's fairly ironic that *SAW* is a game that concerns itself with nefarious traps which brutalise unwary people, as it is, itself, a snare laid for simpleminded consumers. Forget the derivative gameplay and the (unintentionally) horrific visuals, *SAW* is nothing but a boredom endurance test on a Blu-ray.

Getting to the trophy goodies is a pushover thanks to none of them being tied to a difficulty level (pick the easiest). You can also do the old 'finish the game to get one ending, then reload the final checkpoint to get the other' trick.

6 Kung Fu Panda 2

YEAR: 2011 FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: GRIPTONITE

LAME-O-METER: DISHONORABLE



If you're getting into this because you're a fan of the riotous comedic stylings of Jack Black and stunning, genre-defining gameplay, *man alive* you're about to become one sad panda.

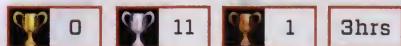
One playthrough is all you'll need to get your kung fu grip on every trophy. We recommend you follow the path of Master Croc as he teaches you the Acu-Punch: a combat mechanic that's about as well balanced as the wino who infiltrated your office Christmas party. Pro tip: use this win button to *not lose*.

5 Trine 2

YEAR: PSN FORMAT: PS3

DEVELOPER: FROZENBYTE

LAME-O-METER: SOLID



Oh thank the gaming gods. Finally, another game that we can type about that won't trigger the gag reflex and make us want to have a cold shower in the foetal position.

Trine 2 is great. Having it installed on your PS3 is like doing yourself a solid. Conversely, most other games in this article are like having somebody do a *solid* on your PS3.

Trophy-wise, even the most casual among you can reap this game of its rewards without... *trine 2* hard.





4 SEGA Ultimate Mega Drive Collection

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3 DEVELOPER: SEGA
LAME-O-METER: RETRO CONNOISSEUR

19 13 4 10hrs

There's no shame in going back to learn about your heritage, kids. Gathered here for your trophy whoring pleasure are 48 of SEGA's oldest and most modest. Some are classics that deserve to be played, others should be cheat coded through and then scrubbed from your memory forever. Note: cheats won't disable trophies.

The only trophy that may give you a teensy bit of trouble is finishing *Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine*. Fortunately, there's a password that'll skip you to the last level of this horrendously crappy game. Go to 'Continue' and enter: yellow, orange, blue, blue. Boom.

2 Hannah Montana: The Movie

YEAR: 2009 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: EA
LAME-O-METER: INSTA-ABUSE

30 8 4 3hrs

Purchase this in a brown paper bag, avoid the looks on the bus when the beating of its hideous Black-ray heart whispers to you, and jam it in your home console. Congratulations, you've now made your gaming soul unclean.

But while all cats will now hiss at you and your friends treat you like a necrophiliac telemarketer, in next to no time you'll have many, many more digital trinkets to your name. 5-starring a song in this game is insultingly easy, and so is collecting dresses and patting your pony. Your real challenge is staying awake.



3 NCIS: The Game

YEAR: 2011 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
LAME-O-METER: CREDIBILITY: D.O.A.

5 16 5 3hrs

In next to no time after purchasing *NCIS: The Game* the average gamer will deduce that they've been gyped harder than a pike caravan sale. It's short, boring, easy and looks like a dog's breakfast regurgitated. To a 'trophyist' however, this is a failsafe way to earn a platinum with zero faffing about.

Every single trophy is tied to the story and is unmissable. Every puzzle, be it a hack, or an interview, can be instantly and infinitely retried until you get it – you cannot be the loser here. Your friends will argue otherwise.



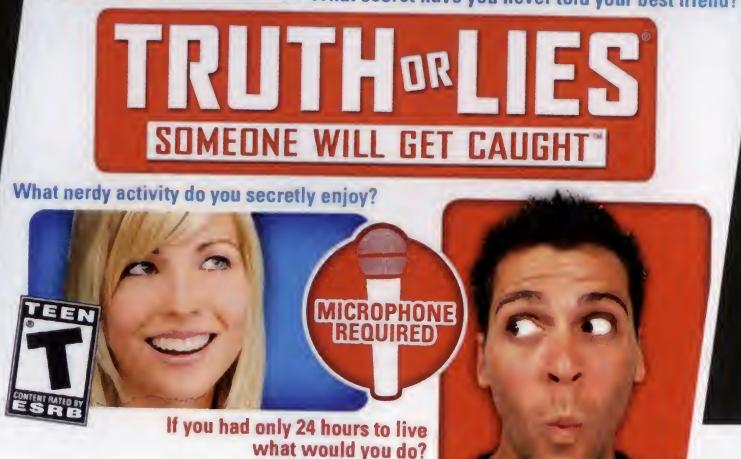
1 Truth or Lies

YEAR: 2010 FORMAT: PS3
DEVELOPER: BIG ANT STUDIOS
LAME-O-METER: LYING TO YOURSELF

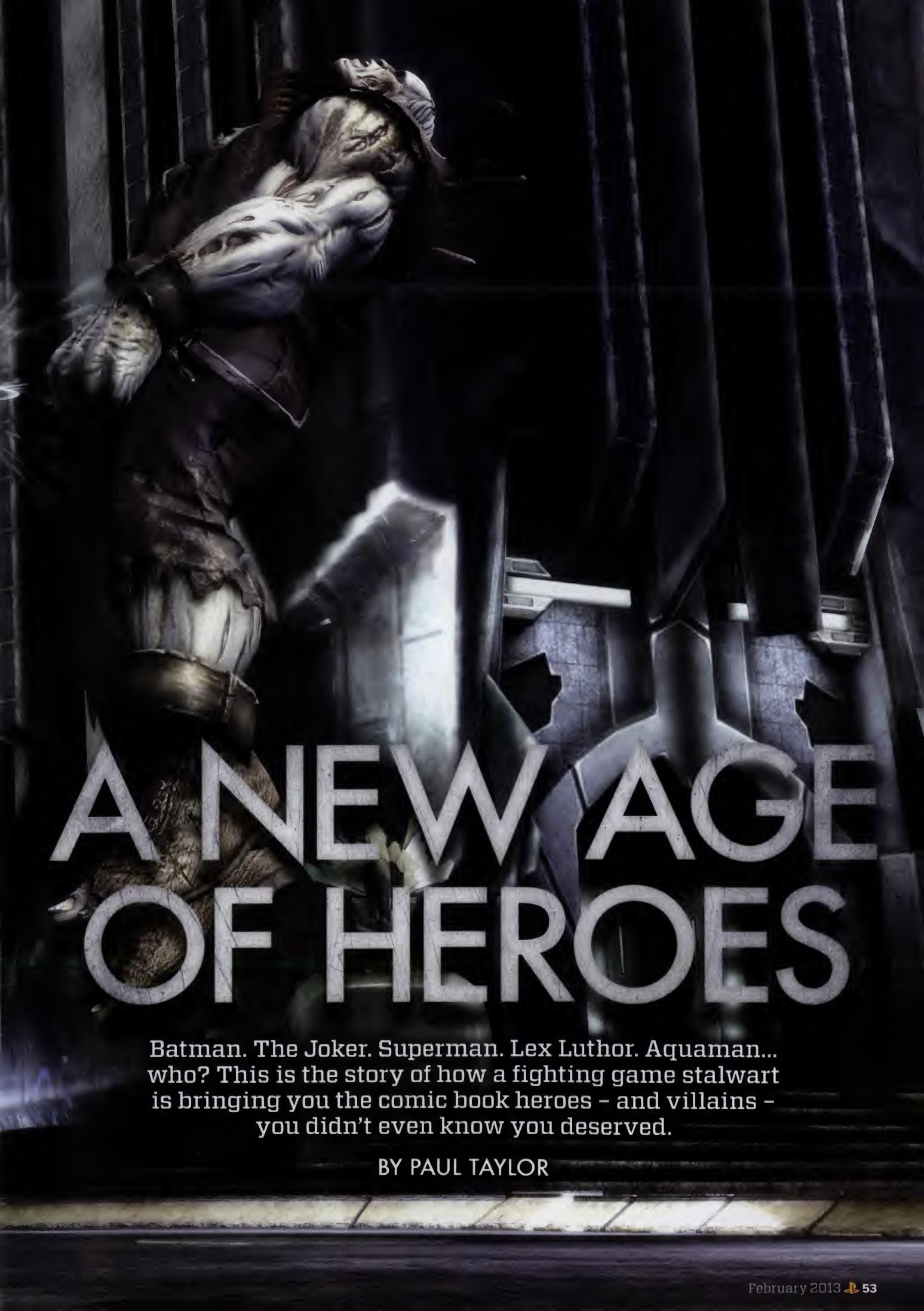
9 3 1 1hr

Truth or Lies is a steaming turd of a game whose claim to fame is the ability to analyse the pitch and vibration of your vocal responses to determine if you're telling porky pies. Note: it's not a functioning lie detector, at all. Those pops you just heard were your brain cells committing suicide.

Our research team actually won two trophies while trying to confound the voice-recognition technology. Seems the microphone interprets short farts as lies, longer ones as brutal honesty. The box art now makes so much more sense.







ANEWAGE OF HEROES

Batman. The Joker. Superman. Lex Luthor. Aquaman... who? This is the story of how a fighting game stalwart is bringing you the comic book heroes - and villains - you didn't even know you deserved.

BY PAUL TAYLOR

Dear costume designers, why the body armour? He's the fricken *Man of Steel*



Let's address the 6'1", 325lb fish-man-shaped elephant in the room straight away. Aquaman is going to star in the next fighting game being made by *Mortal Kombat* creators, Netherrealm, alongside Batman, Superman, Cat Woman, Wonder Woman, and a clutch of other famous superheroes and villains from the DC stable.

"One of the things we wanted to do was push people down the path of trying different characters," says Adam Urbano, the Senior Producer at Netherrealm. "We really want people to get away from the 'Batman/Superman show' essentially. There are a lot of characters that we all know and love that 99 per cent of people might not, so we're pushing people in that route."

It's a gamble. In fact, the whole game's a gamble, one of contradictions and betting against the odds, or at least what's expected. While these are heroes and villains that began life in the pages of comic books, Netherrealm has looked to the movies to inspire their presentation. This is a team that's spent years honing their talents on making snappy fighting games and *Injustice* runs at 60 frames per second.

They've found out what works and doesn't, but are pushing their boundaries to introduce mechanics rarely seen in fighting games. Traditional rounds have been scrapped. It's silly, with supermoves that sees one character – The Flash – run around the world before he lands his first punch. However, it's also deceptively technical, as the in-game menus rattle off starting frames, breakout frames, points of damage next to button combinations – all the stuff that caters to the hardcore fighting game crowd.

Spend a few rounds with *Injustice*, and you'll see it's a gamble that's going to pay off.

SCREENPLAY

First and foremost on Urbano's mind is that when people play *Injustice* they're going to get the feeling they're playing a big summer blockbuster release, but one that's packed with plenty of little details. Even the

menu system, wedged between 'Press Start' and the beginning of a round, is modelled after a Blu-ray movie.

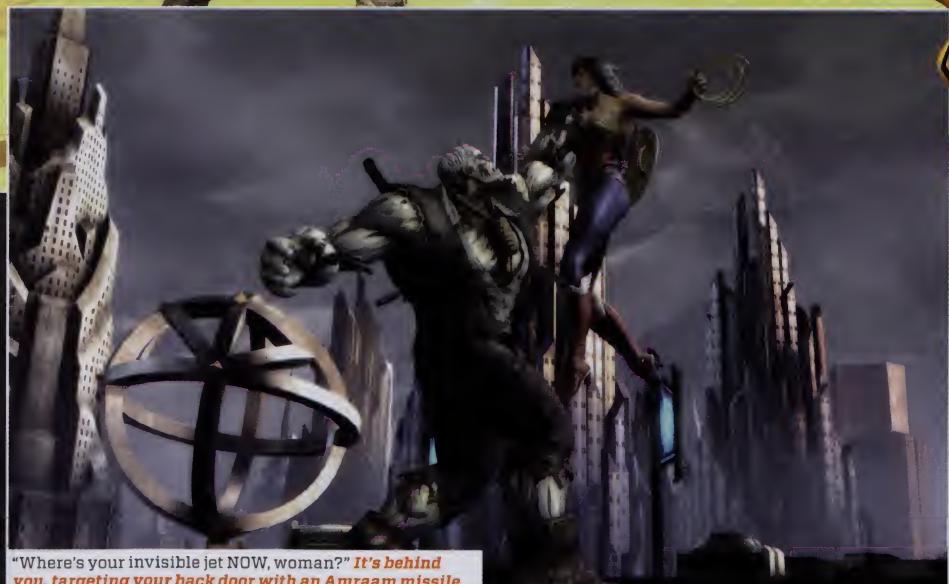
The story mode, normally a forgettable component in most brawlers, has had special attention paid to it. Netherrealm's latest *Mortal Kombat* (banned in Australia) featured a well thought-out story campaign, featuring most of the roster of selectable characters. For *Injustice*, renowned comic book writers Justin Gray and Jimmy Palmiotti worked with the team in creating the script.

"We really liked having a story campaign in our games [*Mortal Kombat* and *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe*] that's different from other fighting games, so long before we got started on the details of the characters we got started on their individual stories," explains Urbano.

THE NEW DC

In September 2011, DC Comics streamlined its diverse and storied catalogue of serialised funny books with a complete reboot, dubbed 'The New 52.' All 52 titles in this new line started fresh with new #1s and a new continuity – all part of a sustained effort to attract new readers. Part and parcel with this initiative was a move towards digital distribution, with downloads of all titles available the very instant the dead tree editions hit the shelves. Reception of the New 52 has been mixed. While arguably a commercial success, the reboot has seen several fan-favourite characters airbrushed out of DC history, including the popular replacement Batgirls Cassandra Cain and Stephanie Brown. Barbara Gordon is back in the Bat-Tights, her spinal damage suddenly and inexplicably cured. Fans of Babs's wheelchair-bound 'Oracle' persona felt cheated by this overly retroactive continuity. You can't make everyone happy.

You gotta love a girl with a **shoot-from-the-hip attitude**

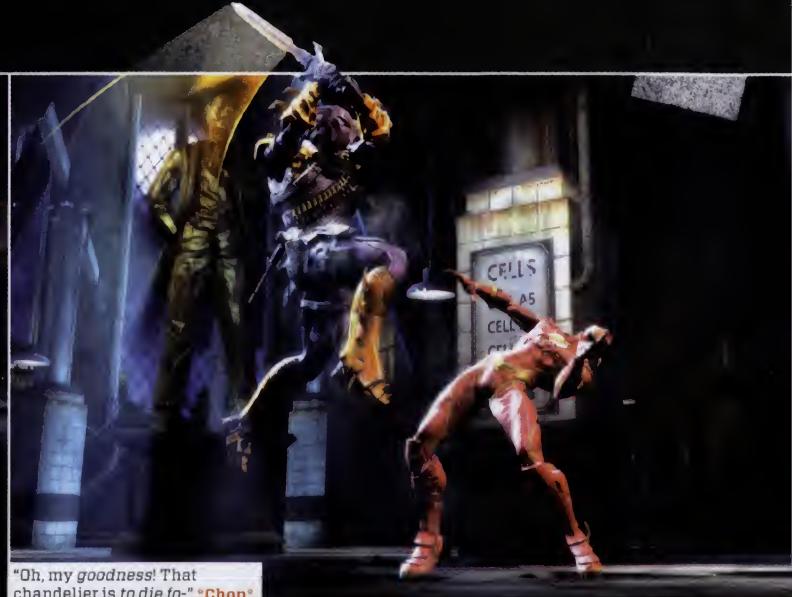


"The Netherrealm guys did a really good job on a first draft with the the overall story arc, DC had input with Jimmy and Justin but I think for the most part we nailed it early on. Then from there it was just spicing it up, making sure we had all the characters working right and that was a huge input from Jimmy and Justin, making sure we were in the DC canon and making it a super-powerful story."

While details are scant at this stage, the overall feel of the story and the performances put in by the actors makes this watchable. It begins with a shot of a shattered Metropolis and the iconic Daily Planet statue lying in a jagged heap. A news ticker reveals millions have died as a result of an explosion, and in a building somewhere the Gotham City Police Department look at the screens in horror at the devastation.

Inside a well-protected cell, Batman is interrogating the Joker. Turns out the Clown Prince of Crime has used a weapon that strikes fear into most nations: a nuclear

" TURNS OUT THE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME HAS USED A WEAPON THAT STRIKES FEAR INTO MOST NATIONS: A NUCLEAR BOMB. "



bomb. He's not giving up where he got the device from easily. Superman appears, breaking straight through the wall, ready to be more forceful and tosses Batman aside.

The Joker's always been a cruel and psychopathic character, one who torments his nemesis – and even allies – with jibes and threats. He's not afraid of Superman and hints that Supes has killed Lois Lane – and his child.

While Batman pleads with Superman not to kill the Joker, who's being held up by the throat by the Man of Steel, his eyes are burning red, and camera cuts away as the Joker screams.

BATTLE ROYALE

It's a beginning that's also an end. *Mortal Kombat* did something similar before winding back the clock, and in a new scene we're watching a generous handful of heroes and villains battling on the ground and above the skies of Metropolis, pre-explosion. Why they're there and why they're fighting isn't explained, and the whole of the first chapter is intentionally ambiguous.

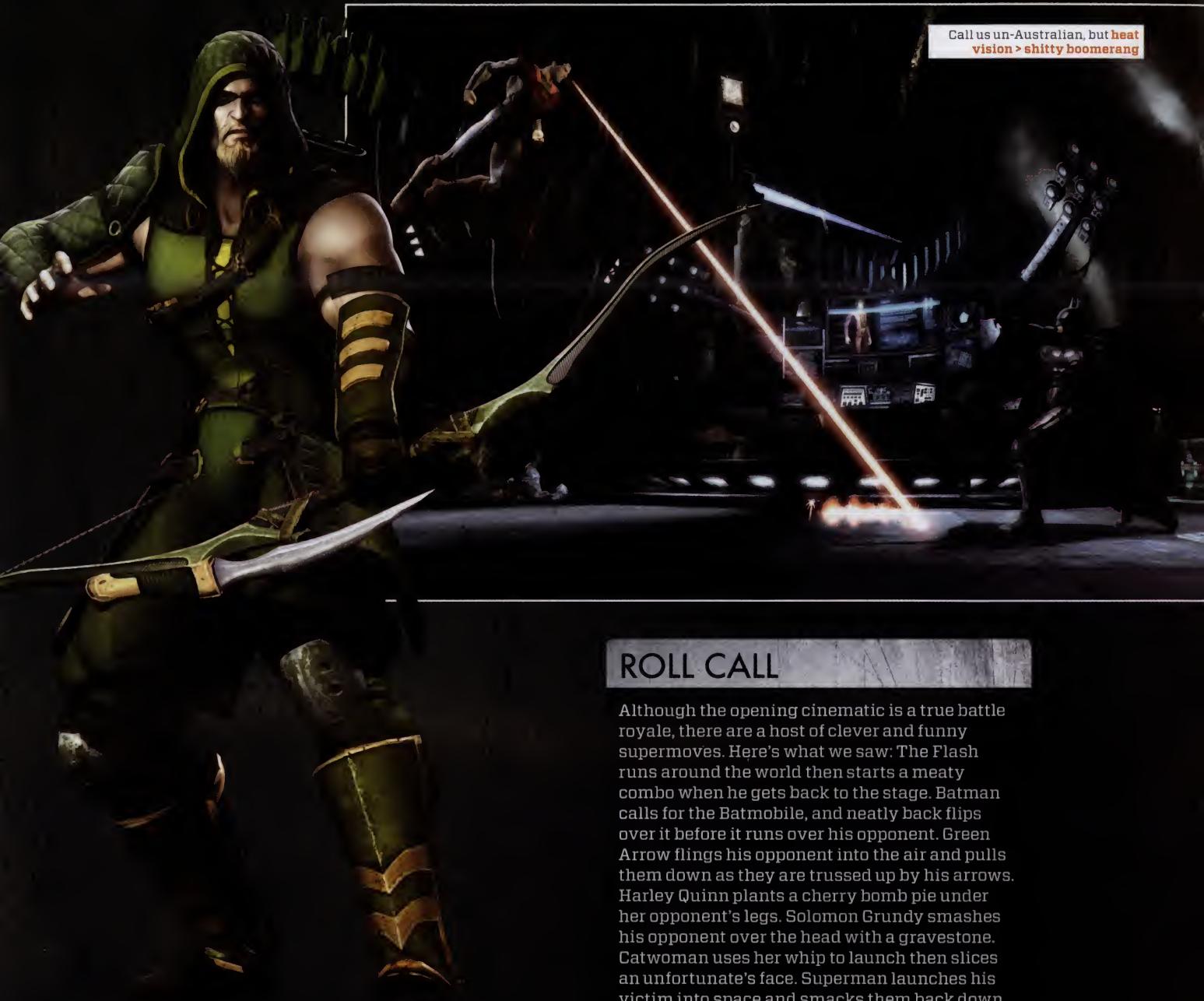
"WE REALLY WANT PEOPLE TO GET AWAY FROM THE 'BATMAN/SUPERMAN SHOW'"

However, it is arresting, strewn with characters from DC lore. The Flash shares a quip with the Green Arrow. Black Adam fights Shazam. Sinestro battles Green Lantern, and Doomsday fights Superman. We even see a flash of Ares. It's a visual barrage, and their appearance doesn't guarantee that they're playable.

"We thought it would be a cool challenge to take characters people might not know, like Ares, and turn them into [a character where people would say] 'oh my god, this is an awesome badass comic character!' and hopefully raise them to the pantheon of [Batman or Superman]," explains Urbano.

Making lesser known characters like Ares – and, yes Aquaman – look cool and desirable was a challenge that the team took on, and they're packed with details, holding a big presence on screen and a lot of weight. The amount of time and effort spent crafting these models meant, there were "hundreds" Netherrealm had to leave out. "There were some that were just an awesome challenge to this team. Aquaman would be a great example of someone who, if [we] make him look





Call us un-Australian, but heat
vision > shitty boomerang

cool enough, we wanted to reverse the stigma of a character who people might think was silly and turn him into someone who's powerful. It's a creative challenge. There are a lot of DC characters like Aquaman that we really took on, and we thought 'what are the core components that aren't silly and how do we make them badass?'

Nor is there a particular theme or existing storyline from the DC lore that's being followed, despite a large chunk of these characters being part of the Justice League of America.

"There are a lot of Justice League characters that we'd be silly not to have in our game," says Urbano. "We veer off into something that's pretty custom pretty early on. We're really looking to set up our own universe and something different that comic fans will be surprised by."

ROUND ONE

We've played *Injustice* before, way back at E3 last year and also locally a few months ago. What's more pronounced now is that as the fighters take damage their costumes become scuffed and battered, punctured with holes and rips. Taking a cue from *Mortal Kombat*,

ROLL CALL

Although the opening cinematic is a true battle royale, there are a host of clever and funny supermoves. Here's what we saw: The Flash runs around the world then starts a meaty combo when he gets back to the stage. Batman calls for the Batmobile, and neatly back flips over it before it runs over his opponent. Green Arrow flings his opponent into the air and pulls them down as they are trussed up by his arrows. Harley Quinn plants a cherry bomb pie under her opponent's legs. Solomon Grundy smashes his opponent over the head with a gravestone. Catwoman uses her whip to launch then slices an unfortunate's face. Superman launches his victim into space and smacks them back down. Nightwing makes multiple passes on bike and then gets busy with his Kali. Cyborg turns his arm into a plasma cannon. Wonder Woman uses her lasso to tie opponent her up and then tag-teams with Amazonian warriors. Busy!

outer layers of skin come off, but forget about gore at the intensity of *MK*. As far as we've seen, no-one dies at the end of a match; heads remain attached to spines, but it undeniably feels like a *Mortal Kombat* game. Batman, with his range of gadgets, excels at mid-to-close range, flinging batarangs and also shoots a grappling hook at chest height, launching him closer to his enemy, feet first.

Of course, this isn't the first time that Netherrealm have done a DC fighting game with an *MK* flavour. In their guise as Midway, *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* was an unusual and relatively unfavourable mix that couldn't fully commit to *MK*'s brand of violence, and also betrayed the style and presentation normally associated with DC.

So how is *Injustice* going to be different? What's the change in philosophy? The major force was a change in management at DC. In 2010, Geoff Johns became

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

Even before they were Netherrealm, the team behind *Injustice* has nearly always made fighting games. *Mortal Kombat* came before the game you're reading about, as the studio was reborn out of the ashes of Midway Games. It made sense. Co-creator of *MK*, Ed Boon, had a brand-new studio in Chicago, and a project that reinvented the slightly cheesy series would be a great test of skill. It paid off. So how did *Injustice* come to be? It was an "amazing piece of luck", according to Urbano. "We had finished *Mortal Kombat*, and Warner Bros owns DC [Comics]. Through a happenstance meeting at Burbank they were looking for a project. We didn't want to jump in and spit out another *Mortal Kombat*, so they gave us a whole spiel about how 'it's a whole new DC, we can make the game we want with them'. It was an awesome opportunity with this great canon, and through a chance meeting this is what we ended up making."



Her special attack: **ringworm**

Way to judge distances,
flying kick noob

the new Chief Creative Officer at DC Comics. Johns had been working on comics in one capacity or another since 1999, at both Marvel and DC. "*MK versus DC* was essentially an *MK* game with DC characters in it," says Urbano, picking his words carefully. "That in retrospect is not the way to approach either game. It doesn't do justice to either franchise. So this time, we went in knowing [we were dealing with] a new DC, a whole new creative team we were working with, we had Geoff Johns fully behind the project and a chance to do what we thought was right.

"[This is] going to be *MK*'s take on the DC universe. That's everything from original character design and you'll see how we have them armoured, which is in line with how Netherrealm does things, and it really lets us create and craft a story that's DC-centric with very little *MK* built into it. Essentially, don't try and mash up two sets of universes to make the fans happy: actually just make a game that is done right, and in this case this is a purely a DC game."

Injustice still feels like a *MK* game with the over-the-top moves, and uses a very modified *MK* engine, and some of the *MK* fight mechanics. It's not a concession, and it's not laziness, but it works harmoniously. The over-the-top moments lend themselves well to the casual pick-up-and-play nature Netherrealm want. While some things are very different, like the background

props that can be interacted with, and some of the core mechanics, for the most part you'll be able to pick up the controller and get what's going on.

Controls don't require finger-breaking contortions, with the face buttons reserved for light, medium, heavy attacks in conjunction with simple directions for variations, and quarter-circles or forward-back for specials. There's a dedicated 'gimmick' button, shoulder buttons handle grabs and interactions with the background, while stabbing **L1** and **R1** executes a dedicated supermove. It goes slightly deeper than that with the new 'wager' system (more on that later), but the team are still crafting exactly how that will be initiated.

"It was our goal from day one to make [*Injustice*] so that people who don't necessarily love the depth of frame counting can just pick up the game and do something that makes them feel awesome and powerful. Things like simplifying the control scheme, or making the supers be activated by two buttons, the character's gimmick being [one button]. There's other stuff that are players who don't 'get' or haven't played fighting games in years to pick it up and feel like a superhero."

"It's not mandatory, but there's all of that depth. We put it on the screen, we let everybody know 'this is the hit value and range for this move if you want to play at a competitive level,' but we know that it's a minority of the player base."

ROUND TWO

The gimmick button acts differently for each character. Batman has a cluster of batarangs that circle around him when you first press \odot , then home in on his opponent at the second stab, and recharge over time. Harley Quinn has a gift box that buffs her abilities, such as dealing more damage. Superman enters a 'rage' mode. By contrast, Nightwing switches between his staff and sticks at will, and Wonder Woman either has her lasso or sword, opening up a whole new range of attacks. "It's the quick and easy way to figure out if that character's going to fit your play style," says Urbano.

Traditional healthbars have been scrapped for a persistent bar that's split into two. As soon as one person's bar has been chopped in half, there's a small break, but the position of the fighters doesn't change. "It goes along with decisions we made early on to make the game as cinematic as possible," explains Urbano. "There's nothing more gamey than having someone pop up on screen and say 'round two, fight!' and then reset."

Interestingly, the current winner's bar isn't reset – it stays at the same level. The victim can initiate a wager to try and claw some health back by betting a small, medium or large portion of their super meter. It's a risk/reward mechanic that should lead to some interesting decisions depending on the state of the match.

Also in the mix are 'destructibles', elements of the stage that are props that can be interacted with. In the Batcave, Batman's car can shoot rockets from the background. In Metropolis, a hovering vehicle can be grabbed and thrown, or used as a solid object to throw an opponent in to. In another, a handy cache of ever-present exploding barrels can be lobbed, and depending on the character class, they're either rolled on the ground or tossed at head height. Some objects are a one-time use, others replenish over time. In a match the props can get frantic, and using them effectively relies a lot on knowing where they are, as well as being prepared for how your character – and

DETECTIVE CHIMP

Detective Chimp is one of Urbano's favourite DC characters – "there are two things that I love: Sherlock Holmes, and monkeys," – but the team has come to appreciate other characters you might not have heard of. Such as? The Blackest Night storyline which involves zombies, or the Red Sun storyline where Superman is a communist. "They really let you dive into the world of characters you might not otherwise know, so you get to love even traditional characters like Green Lantern," explains Urbano.

opponent – can use them.

Like the fighters, the backgrounds at the end of a match don't look much like they did at the start. Destruction is a big part of the game. "[It's evolved from] small items that broke, now we have events where whole buildings that come collapsing down and smoke fills the whole screen," enthuses Urbano.

The edge of some screens also lead through to other partitions in the stage, broken through with a heavy attack. Out of the handful of locations we saw the transitions were often comedic and absurd: uppercuts or sledgehammers that fire an unfortunate fighter up through multiple storeys of a building, or tumbling down and cracking into girders. Many will make you wince, but they're all but guaranteed to make you smile. Again, it comes back to the 'blockbuster presentation' of seamless cuts and superheroes taking a pasting.

Spend time with *Injustice* and you'll find a brawler that simultaneously pays dividends to fans with cool nods and a clever interpretations of the character's personalities. The distinction between the heavy hitters and fast fighters is huge, but everything feels weighty and kinetic. Blows land with force.

Although there's still some balancing to be done it's on track to being a fighter to watch out for. And there's nothing fishy about that. 

**"CONTROLS
DON'T REQUIRE
FINGER-BREAKING
CONTORTIONS"**

Next month in OPS: How to put the spark back into your relationship



the PLAYSTATION 2012 AWARDS



We reviewed over 200 games last year, but only one can be the *OPS* game of the year as voted for by you. That's not all. Our team of experts has gone back through all the games we played, judging which would be honoured with our other prestigious titles. There will be glory. There will be tears. Readers, welcome to the *Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia* Awards for 2012.



BEST GAME IN WHICH YOU CAN BLOW HITLER'S BALLS OFF

SNIPER ELITE V2

Who hasn't fantasised about shooting Hitler's balls off? We're close to believing that the game's gruesome X-ray camera was made specifically for this very moment – watching one of history's greatest criminal's nuts explode is an unparalleled spectacle. A caveat: you'll need to fork out for this DLC mission, charmingly titled 'Assassinate the Führer'.



BEST TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT

WIPEOUT 2048

What better franchise to demonstrate the raw technical potential of the Vita than Sony's signature sci-fi racing series. *Wipeout 2048* let you play against those with *Wipeout HD* on PS3, over the internet, with zero noticeable lag. Alas, Sony has now shut down the games developer, Studio Liverpool, thus rendering the games name retroactively ironic.



BEST OPEN WORLD

SLEEPING DOGS

The best open worlds let you go wandering, absorbing and exploring all the details of the environment. At night, the violent, living, breathing parts of Hong Kong come alive as you stroll (if you can restrain yourself) through the markets, and as the sun sinks behind the skyscrapers and sweaty apartments, neon lights take over the streets, and the citizens put on a show.

Runners-up

FAR CRY 3
NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED



MOST ADDICTIVE GAME

JETPACK JOYRIDE

Escape is impossible in Halfbrick's endless runner so why keep trying? Dodging countless lasers, missiles and zappers while riding dragons to earn a steady stream of micro rewards, that's why. Responsive controls, well-tuned gameplay and the constant need to nab just a few more coins made Jetpack Joyride swindle countless hours from our collective life-spans. So worth it.



BIGGEST DEVIATION FROM THE FORMULA

BLACK OPS II

The latest *Call of Duty* surprised all comers with a salvo of innovative and unconventional features. Divergent endings, the introduction of player choice and consequence helped breathe new life into the campaign, and the villain was surprisingly sympathetic. The multiplayer load-out system got a serious upgrade, while CoDcasting made multiplayer an accessible sport.



Runners-up

DARKSIDERS II
SILENT HILL: BOOK OF MEMORIES



BEST PS VITA GAME

ASSASSIN'S CREED III LIBERATION

Zut alors! A technically impressive, fully-featured, and convention-defying installment in Ubisoft's series of murder-sim money trains, set across swathes of France's sweaty, swampy, southern colony, Louisiana. Whether stealing across the roof-tops of New Orleans, or infiltrating high society, Aveline is the very definition of a femme fatale. The gyroscope mini-games felt a little tacked on, but what else is new?



Runners-up
GRAVITY RUSH
NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

MY GAME OF THE YEAR



DAN STAINES

DRAGON'S DOGMA

2012 was an unusually good year for games, and an unusually divisive one at that. *Dragon's Dogma* was one of the few games released to receive near universal praise, and the reason for that is that it is unambiguously rad. The reason it is rad is because it lets you climb on an ogre's face and stab it in the eye with a flaming longsword. Mark my words: this is going to become a marquee franchise for Capcom.



BEST CO-OP

BORDERLANDS 2

While a fine gameplay experience in single-player, *Borderlands 2* kicks things into overdrive when you start getting jiggy with the specialised class roles. Frankly, it's offensive how much creativity you have with two, three or four players teaming up. And, the systems tying it together ought to be the new benchmark. Swapping loot should always be this easy.



THE KNACKERED HDD AWARD FOR SAVE EARLY, SAVE OFTEN

XCOM

It's seldom that a developer can trap lightning in a bottle, and re-create the 'vibe' that made a beloved retro title a hit in the first place. Every decision matters in *XCOM*, and it's all too easy to send one of your best soldiers to an early grave. Save before a mission, yep, of course. Wait, that Grey's looking like he's getting close, save. Good, he's dead, save. Save, save, save.

Runners-up
DISHONORED

THE FLASH IN THE PAN AWARD

KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING

Curt Schilling assumed that if he applied the same unstoppable confidence that made him a baseball star to the business world, he could forge a video game development juggernaut. Alas, 38 Studios collapsed under a mountain of debt shortly after *Kingdoms of Amalur* launched. "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."



MY GAME OF THE YEAR



JAMES COTTEE

BORDERLANDS 2

Sheer primal satisfaction that is quite literally elemental. To bathe robots in acid, to lash psychos with flame, and to watch them scream and disintegrate before your eyes. To reduce every last vicious badass to viscous pus... Dealing out death is seldom this exquisite. Top stuff!

BEST SOUND

SOUND SHAPES

Sound in games should be evocative, emotive, linked to what you're doing and able to push you on and achieve more. *Sound Shapes* does all of that, the beats of the world filled in with each collectible, the music and effects telling a story as the level scrolls on. The fact that Beck has a hand in it helps, too.

Runners-up
JOURNEY

BEST VALUE

OKAMI HD

For just shy of 30 bucks, you're not only buying 80+ hours of gameplay, you're also buying a souped-up, tricked-out, pimptacular 1080p remake of one of the best PS2 games ever made. Ever. Beyond the majestic, eye-lathering visuals, there's an engrossing story, and a nifty, *Zelda*-like system of upgrades and exploration. Divine.



MOST DISAPPOINTING GAME

SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Billed as *Apocalypse Now* for the videogame age, this rough-hewn third-person shooter had such glaring flaws you often wondered if the squaddies from *Tropic Thunder* did the coding. There's a noticeable lag when you stick to cover, and said cover is sometimes so sticky that it's impossible to extricate yourself before a grenade blasts your insides back to a distant checkpoint. The game design clichés were distracting, and the 'controversial' story elements only showed up right before the end. The horror. The horror...

Runners-up

RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED
LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

THE MOST HARDCORE GAME

ROCKSMITH

For all the party-starting novelty of the last wave of plastic guitar music games, there was always a voice that whispered in the back of your mind as you dealt out savoury licks: "You're not *really* playing a guitar." But in *Rocksmith*, you *are* really playing a guitar. Thanks to a special dongle, you can plug any electric axe into your PS3, and start on the long road towards musical competence thanks to a carefully-crafted battery of graded mini-games. It gets very tough, very quickly, but you'll love every minute.



Runners-up

JUST DANCE 4
UFC UNDISPUTED

MY GAME OF THE YEAR

NATHAN LAWRENCE
JOURNEY

This is the first title I've played since I first turned a console on many, many years ago that left my jaw on the ground. It's such a simple concept, but the flawless execution makes for an unforgettable and engaging game experience from start to finish, whether you're playing solo or not. Also, it includes the most evocative game soundtrack ever.

THE CAPTAIN OBVIOUS AWARD
FOR THE GAME THAT DOES
WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TINFLOATING CLOUD GOD
SAVES THE PILGRIMS

In this PS mini, the god who floats on a cloud guides pilgrims to the end of the stage, but he needs the love of the followers that walk below him so that he can save them. Success stems from collecting those hearts at just the right moments to maximise your firepower. Deceptively simple. Utterly addictive!

Runner-up
DISHONOREDBEST GAME WITH A
BOW AND ARROW

I AM ALIVE

Granted, there were quite a few games in 2012 with stand-out archery elements, but *I Am Alive* had ranged weaponry with a difference: your ammo was extremely limited. Since you only found a handful of bullets in the entire game, most of the time you'd use your gun to bluff. Arrows, on the other hand, were reusable – though you did have to go up to your freshly-slain victims and extract them by hand... Shlick! It was a taste of what we can expect from *The Last of Us*, though a better title might've been that line from Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*: "I am alive and you are dead."



MY GAME OF THE YEAR



JAMES ELLIS

JOURNEY

Journey for the win. It feels less like a 'product' and more the result of an avant-garde studio at their creative apex. Cross the threshold into this dusty and imposing world, and you soon find yourself lost in a realm where deeds are legend, and friendship is magic. A cheap, brief, and downloadable title, it's a signpost for the future of the medium where games will be more emotive and less puerile.

BEST MOVE IMPLEMENTATION

UNFINISHED SWAN

Unfinished Swan succeeds because it uses the Move to empower players, engendering a sense of absolute agency unhindered by fiddly implementation. You point the wand, you shoot the paint, and you create a world from nothingness. Simple and immediately rewarding – like all good Move games tend to be.

Runners-up

SORCERY
MOVE FITNESS

BEST ASSASSIN

CORVO, DISHONORED

Once a bodyguard entrusted with the safety of an Empress, Corvo Attano is an assassin out of necessity rather than choice, and that is precisely what makes him a compelling character. When Corvo kills, it is not for money or power or pleasure, but for honour – both his own and that of the woman whose life he failed to protect. He's the gentleman assassin, the principled killer, and a total badass to boot. Gotta love those magic powers.

BEST PSN GAME

JOURNEY

So much more than a game. Like *thatgamecompany*'s previous titles, it is more like guided meditation – serene, ponderous, and profound. It brings people together, creating bonds that are as significant as they are short-lived. In short, it's a masterpiece, and proof-positive that games can be so much more than just idle diversions for blood-thirsty juveniles.

Runners-up

VELOCITY
TOKYO JUNGLE



BEST LOCAL MULTIPLAYER

WRECKED: REVENGE REVISITED

All it takes is an issue that needs settled ("Your turn to do the washing up" "No, it isn't"), the revamped Ice Bridge, and just one more go. *Wrecked* also wins the award for 'Game Most Likely to Cost you a Friendship'.

THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT AWARD FOR THE BEST GAME THAT YOU CAN'T BUY IN AUSTRALIA

SYNDICATE

Syndicate was banned in Australia because it was extremely violent – so violent, in fact, that releasing it with an MA15+ rating would have been grossly irresponsible. That's a pity, because it was a slickly made, gritty cyberpunk delight. Miles Kilo (that's you) had weight, and a bunch of really, really, sweet toys. Re-release, please!

Runners-up

THE WALKING DEAD



BEST VILLAIN

HANDSOME JACK, BORDERLANDS 2

Described by his own creators as an insufferable douche, Handsome Jack is one of those truly memorable villains that you love to hate and hate to love. Equal parts charming and obnoxious, you want to take him down, not for justice or the greater good, but simply to wipe the smirk off his stupid face. Also: he has a pony, made of diamonds, called Butt Stallion. So... yeah.

MY GAME OF THE YEAR



DAVE KOZICKI FAR CRY 3

Any game that lets you jump off a cliff face, wingsuit up, glide over an enemy outpost, pop your chute, detach above some poor sap and embed a machete through his chest before your feet even touch the ground is a winner in my book. Pro tip: when hunting use grenades or explosive arrows, it may not be PETA-friendly but it gets the job done.

WIDEST OF THE MARK MARKETING CAMPAIGN

MEDAL OF HONOR WARFIGHTER

EA went the extra psycho-mile with *Warfighter* by partnering with REAL weapons manufacturers to produce REAL *Medal of Honor*-branded weapons, including a one-of-a-kind tomahawk designed in consultation with REAL soldiers. Result: yanked.

Runner-up

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

MY GAME OF THE YEAR



TOBY MCCASKER

THE DARKNESS II

Some nights before I go to bed I offer up a loud prayer to my ceiling and it goes like this: "Lawd, please make a game specifically for Tobe, ay." This year, ceiling-lurkers Digital Extremes delivered unto me *The Darkness II*. So broodle, so grim, so kvlt. Black metal gaming innit.

THE 'WHY DID THEY BOTHER?' WORST MOVIE LICENCE

BATTLESHIP

Instead of making a videogame based on a movie based on a board game nobody has played in 50 years, why not just make a videogame based on what the board-game was designed to simulate in the first place: i.e. naval warfare? Oh, right, because marketing.

Runner-up

007 LEGENDS



CHEEKIEST DLC STRATEGY

STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

Much to the annoyance of pretty much everyone who purchased it, most of *Street Fighter x Tekken*'s DLC – like all the extra characters, for example – was on the disc from day one, meaning Capcom could have included it in the game for free, but preferred to squeeze loyal customers for a few extra bucks instead. What a scam.

Runner-up

RIDGE RACER VITA



BEST BEGINNING

FAR CRY 3

Few games set the scene better than *Far Cry 3*. One moment it's all sun and sand on an idyllic island paradise, the next it's you and your brother cowering in a bamboo cage getting screamed at by a mohawked psychopath. With brutal efficiency, it simultaneously introduces your nemesis and gives you all the reason you need to want him dead – and this is all before the opening credits. Powerful stuff.



STRANGEST PLACE YOU'LL FIND SACKBOY

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

Hey look, it's Sackboy... and he's in Hades... fighting Dante, Big Daddy, and Raiden... and he's got a railgun. It's not like Sackie doesn't belong in a celebration of all things PlayStation, but he doesn't look like the kind of guy who'd beat the crap out of a cyborg ninja. He's made of hessian.

Runner-up

LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING



THE NEVER GIVE UP AWARD

HYDROPHOBIA PROPHECY

In the beginning there was *Hydrophobia*, and it was a buggy piece of crap. Then there was *Hydrophobia Pure*, the same game with fewer bugs and a better camera, but the critics remained displeased. Finally came *Hydrophobia Prophecy*, with lots of new content. "Eh, not bad" said the critics, and thus the cycle was complete.

MY GAME OF THE YEAR



SACKBOY

MASS EFFECT 3

The decision late in the game that would cause the complete extinction of one of two sentient races stopped me in my tracks like no other game ever has. When I realised decisions I had made years ago would come back to prevent me from needing to make that gut-wrenching choice and allow me to save them both and prevent a genocide I was floored.



BEST WORST GAME

LE TOUR DE FRANCE 2012

One of the most strategic and watched sports in the world (an estimated 3.5 billion people tuned in) gets a game, where you need to plan what to eat on the road and when, the best times to push and when to coast. Admire it for its spirit, dodge it because it's actually batshit boring and more wooden than Pinocchio on Viagra.



BEST OLD GAME THAT'S NOW NEW

OKAMI HD

Okami HD is a shining example of a HD remake done right (save for the unskippable cutscene) in another year of re-releases. Widescreen, of course, and in 1080p, as you'd hope, but it also incorporates Move controls for meaningful brush strokes. Whether you missed it the first time in 2007 or loved it to death, this is a must-get.

Runners-up

METAL GEAR SOLID HD VITA JET SET RADIO



THE BREEZY AWARD FOR FAN SERVICE

TRANSFORMERS: FALL OF CYBERTRON

Bigger, better, brasher, and brimming with the kind of attention to detail that *Transformers* tragics demand of their interactive robo-blasting entertainment. *Fall of Cybertron* let you play as several different Autobots and Decepticons, and as such offered new insights into their never-ending robo-war.

THE 'LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION, WAGGLE' AWARD FOR BAD MOMENTS WITH CONTROLS

LONDON 2012

Waggle is the motion control equivalent of button mashing. Utterly unnecessary.



BEST ENDING

SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Spoiler alert. While the game was lacklustre, fairly shabby, and failed to live up to its promises, the endings had bite, and were genuinely and surprisingly great.



BEST SEQUEL

MAX PAYNE 3

The downward spiral continues for the tragic, drug-addled Max in this confronting, morally dubious bloodbath. Running on the latest version of the spectacular RAGE engine, the third *Max Payne* assailed our senses with new cover and bullet time play mechanics, and rivers of blood.




**GAME
of the
YEAR**

BORDERLANDS 2

It's astonishing to think of the hundreds of hours we've sunk into blasting away on Pandora and poring over its goodies, and we're sure you have as well. It was close-run contest, with *Assassin's Creed III* right behind it (less than 10 votes separated them!), and *Mass Effect 3* also carving out a solid niche. Well done Gearbox!



HOW THE VOTES WENT DOWN

BORDERLANDS 2	15%
ASSASSIN'S CREED III.....	14%
MASS EFFECT 3.....	10%
FAR CRY 3.....	7%
JOURNEY.....	6%
DISHONORED.....	5%
HITMAN: ABSOLUTION	4%
CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II	4%
PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE	4%
SLEEPING DOGS.....	2%
DARKSIDERS II	<1%

PS VITA GAME OF THE YEAR

UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS	34%
GRAVITY RUSH	16%
ASSASSIN'S CREED III LIBERATION.....	14%
LITTLEBIGPLANET VITA	9%
WIPEOUT 2048.....	2%

YOUR GAME OF THE YEAR QUOTES FOR BORDERLANDS 2

Bazillions of guns, awesome graphics style, amazing concept, fast-paced action, kick-ass storyline and brilliant characters, not to mention Handsome Jack probably being my #1 favourite villain of all time. FPS + RPG + hectic universe = one awesome game.

Liam F.

I picked *Borderlands 2* because of the lootin', the shootin' and the cheeky giggles I get when seeing pop culture.

Joshua B.

A fantastic game to play by yourself, but absolutely spectacular with a bunch of mates.

Bella P.

As the entire formula has been completely refined and almost perfected. The gun range looting, story and comical areas of the game are brilliant. Great job Gearbox.

Jimmy D.

Literally a bazillion guns, hours upon hours spent having fun and taking on badass bosses

Paddy H.

Kept me and my mates entertained for weeks, which is hard to do with games these days. Replayability was awesome and the game split screen and online is just pure sick.

Victor A.

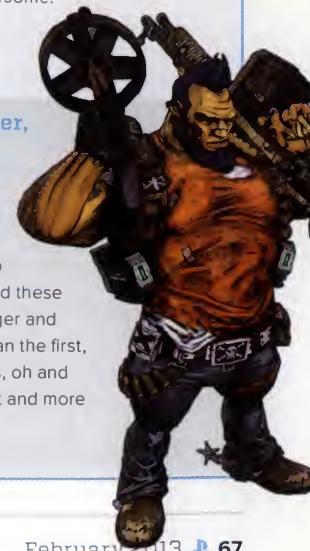
Just so much crazy fun. Some games may make you think and be more emotionally involved in them, but *Borderlands 2* is just purely fun and awesome.

Daniel B.

And the winner, who wins themselves a copy of the game:

Great offline co-op which is hard to find these days, an even bigger and better storyline than the first, fun customisations, oh and of course loot, loot and more loot! AMAZING!

Leesa T.



Win with Resident Evil: Retribution + Save up to \$179.80!

Subscribe to *Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia* to get the latest on all things PlayStation, and save up to \$179.80 compared to buying it in the shops. To celebrate the release of *Resident Evil: Retribution* on Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray and DVD, we have five 12GB super-slim PS3 consoles to give away, thanks to Universal Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Australia.

Resident Evil: Retribution is the fifth instalment in Paul W.S Anderson's series of action/sci-fi film adaptations of *Resident Evil*, and again focuses on Alice (Milla Jovovich), her capture and escape from Umbrella Corporation.

The Umbrella Corporation's deadly T-virus continues to ravage the Earth, transforming the global population into legions of flesh-eating Zombies. The human race's last and only hope is ex-employee of Umbrella, Alice, who awakens in the heart of Umbrella's undercover operations facility used for testing the T-virus and battles to escape.

Without a safe haven, Alice continues to hunt those responsible for the outbreak; a chase that takes her from Tokyo to New York, Washington, D.C. and Moscow, culminating in a mind-blowing revelation that will force her to rethink everything that she once thought to be true!

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in review



► GAME OF THE MONTH

DmC: Devil May Cry

Forget the haters, *DmC*'s the reboot up the butt this ailing series needed

Review ratings

10 **Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an *incredible* fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 **Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 **Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 **Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not *fantastic* overall.

6 **Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 **Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 **Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 **Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 **Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 **The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

72 **DmC: Devil May Cry**

76 **Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force**

78 **Guardians of Middle-earth**

79 **Sine Mora**

80 **Labyrinth Legends**

80 **Uncharted: Fight for Fortune**

81 **Big Sky Infinity**

81 **Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed**



▼ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.





DmC: Devil May Cry

Appetite for reconstruction



It says a lot about the state of gaming when a Western dev's (Ninja Theory are based in Cambridge, UK) reimagining of a wholly Japanese construct like *Devil May Cry* can make the original seem cringeworthy by comparison.

As attached by default as you might be to Capcom's silver-mopped Dante of seven years past, it's hard to argue with the fact the franchise had reached a stalemate with itself and, after playing this for but a few seconds, harder still to see how taking it all back to square zero was ever considered a bad idea. Remakes, reboots, re-whatevers are becoming all the rage right now – some possibly ill-advised, some not. *DmC* with a little "m" is the latter.

It's also indicative of just how far a new coat of paint can go. For everyone wringing their hands over this new crew of Englishmen handling their Dante, feel good:



Upping the (D)ante

his drastic reinvention is the only drastic reinvention, and arguably the only one that was even necessary. New Dante is awesome Dante. Gone is the distinctly Japanese homoeroticism of old, and in comes a young badass in maybe his mid-twenties sinking drinks, going home with strippers, and waking up in his trailer a hungover lord cramped by the refuse of debauchery. "Call us!" is scrawled on his arm in lipstick. He's as indifferent to that future possibility of another great late night as he is to the strange girl in the hood called Kat knocking at his door telling him a Hunter demon's found him. When it invariably pulls him into Limbo (or: scary demon bizarro world where

nothing makes sense) to do epic battle as part of the game's opening tute, he dispatches it with effortless cool and one-liners that should be ludicrous but aren't because he is a cool guy with excellent hair.

This is the arrow Capcom wanted Ninja Theory to craft and aim directly at the gaming hearts of the iGeneration, and they've done so with gusto. They've definitely tried a little too hard and new Dante was clearly not the design of actual young men – more older men imagining the ides of a young man circa now, perhaps drafted from sons and the visiting sons of others – but he's still intensely likeable. Moreover, it's his emergent backstory that really

Info
FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: CAPCOM/AIE
DEVELOPER: NINJA THEORY
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 DEMON SEXSCAPADES



I'm here demons. Smouldering with generic rage



"Ninja Theory are also **not shy about touching on some dark themes**, such as the admission of one character's sexual abuse"

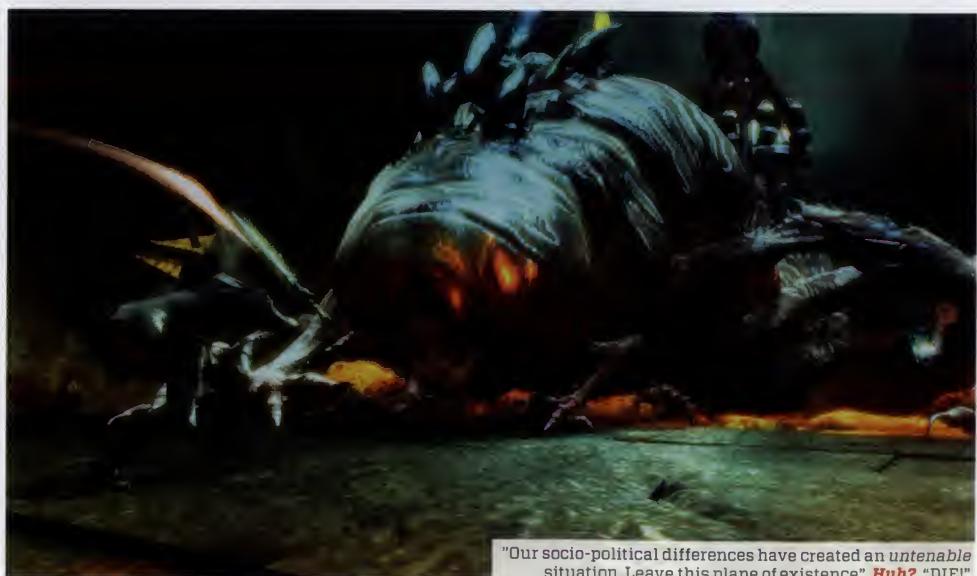
maketh the reborn man; one artfully told both figuratively and literally. "Style" does not just apply to the way in which you kill things here.

The story is a good 'un. So much so that even if you suck at this, there's a good chance you'll hold fast just to see the narrative through. Forget the insular mystical meh-fests of *Devil May Cry* 2001 – 2008, because here we have an entire city under thrall to a demon king in a fine Italian suit: old mate Mundus. Ninja Theory has thrown out Capcom's penchant for the esoteric and invariably meaningless, and have turned instead to social subversion for guidance. It's unexpected, and is arguably an even more topical and effective recreation of the franchise at large than Dante's facelift. No punches withheld, either: Ninja Theory are also not shy about touching on some dark themes, such as the admission of one character's sexual abuse at the hands of their father.

The first time we see Mundus, he's on the phone to someone. He's shouting at whoever it is, demanding results not excuses, and if he doesn't get those results, this guy on the other end of the line will be destroyed. Mundus gets the answer he wants, softening. He says, "You have a good night, Mr. President." To wit: He controls Limbo City from the ground up, the sole force behind its centralised financial institution, its only major news outlet, and the production of Virility. Virility's a delicious fizzy beverage that promises consumers the world with its marketing, but serves, in actuality, as a "lobotomy in a can," as Vergil puts it.

Vergil? Yes. Of the franchise's

redesigned returnees, Vergil is the most significant supporting character to show up in *DmC*. Where there is a seat of absolute and corrupt power like the one Mundus occupies, there will be resistance and Vergil leads that resistance. Post-initial Limbo misadventure (there'll be many more), Kat leads Dante to Vergil, who in turn leads him right down a rabbit hole that reveals the searing core of Ninja Theory's brush with the lore: Dante and Vergil are the twin sons of a demon, Sparda, and an angel, Eva. That makes them Nephilim, and as legend goes, Nephilim are the only thing that can kick the ass of a demon king like Mundus. Extra fuel to that fire: Mundus banished



"Our socio-political differences have created an untenable situation. Leave this plane of existence". Huh? "DIE!"

Get Your Body Beat

DmC's soundtrack is a massive standout, including brooding beats from electronic duo Noisia and full-bore industrial psychosexuality from "Norwegian aggrotech" (it's a thing, for real) crew Combichrist. It's also unusual in that you don't often hear backing tracks in games that feature vocals, much less ones as loud and abrasive as these – but when there's some Norwegian aggrotech man screaming "Get your body beat!" you will be inspired to kill stuff just that little bit harder.

The half-devil wore Prada



Death Threats

Helpfully proving that gamers at large are stable and mature beings, Ninja Theory producer Alex Jones actually received a number of death threats "in the form of comic books and a metal song" from longtime fans of the series pissed off over its reboot. At least they were creative about their ridiculous self-entitlement, but hey, just throwing this out there: please stop doing crap like this. It's just a videogame.

Sparda to eternal damnation for engaging in torrid relations with a heavenly body, and then tore out Eva's heart with his bare hands and possibly ate it. The stage is set very early on, and the furiousness of both motive and resultant mayhem keep pace with each other throughout. Which is saying something, because the action's whip-quick. Ninja Theory might have dropped Capcom's MT Framework engine in favour of Unreal 3 which, technically speaking, is "slower" – but you will not notice.

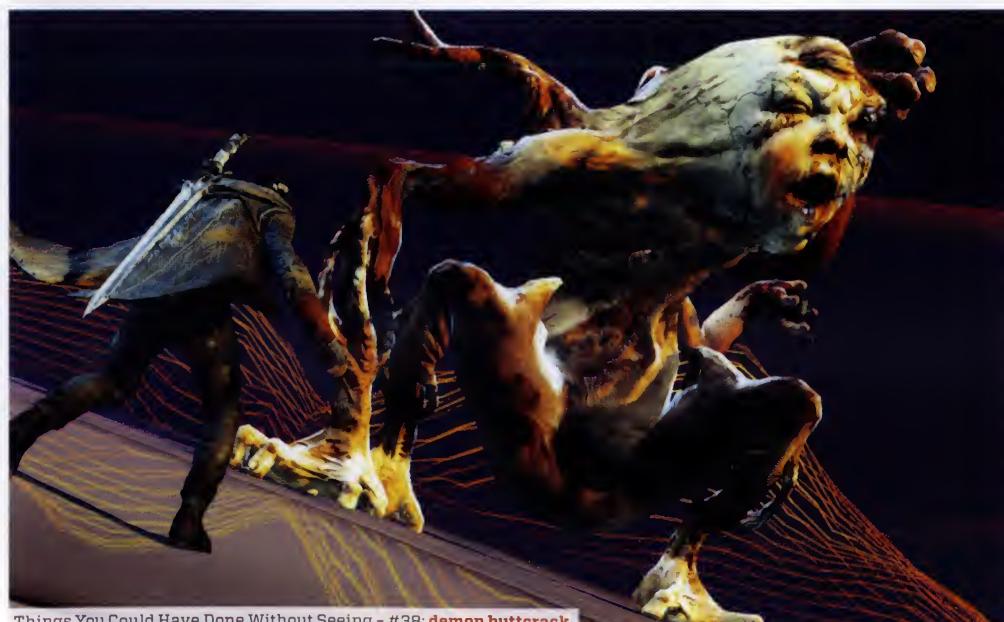
This isn't just some melodramatic flipbook about devil kids killing shit though, it's a red-hot arcade hack 'n' slasher built for high-speed sin and here's the great news: Ninja Theory haven't dumped on it, at all, in terms of mechanics or difficulty. They've just added a few things to the series' signature ballet of up 'n down 'n all around chaos. If anything, they've added too much. Towards the end of the piece, you'll have something like seven weapons that can all be flicked between on the fly (even mid-combo) and all have incredibly

different applications. Ironically, the red 'devil' weapons are servants of your **A** button and tend to be slow but destructive beasts good for taking on tough individual foes. To the **B** side, you'll find the blue 'angel' stuff. These are quick, hit heaps of times for light damage, and tend to cover very wide areas. Good for crowds.

On top of that, you've got your starting blade Rebellion which is versatile if not remarkable, plus your twin 9mms Ebony and Ivory that you'll fall back on for aerial baddies like those bastard cherubs with the bombs. Later, Vergil will toss you his shotgun Revenant and you can really get medieval on a room full o' goons. The introduction of enemies vulnerable exclusively to either angel or demon weapons makes things hectic, especially if you get multiple different types at the same time.

As if all those killing tools and the thousands of ways in which they can interact with each other wasn't enough to consider, your Ophion whip can be used to either pull you towards enemies, or pull them towards you (or even steal their shields away, in some cases). It ends up being a lot like *God of War's* methamphetamine weekend.

Naturally, the potential for dazzling aerial combo madness is huge, and with judicious use of the whip's push 'n' pull you can conceivably wrack up the kind of

Things You Could Have Done Without Seeing - #38: **demon buttcrack**



"Ooooh this is one of those 'leap of faith' dealios! The penitent man shall pa-Aaarghhh..."



This actually happened in The Bible. **Somewhere towards the back...**



And then some bastard made off with my **Tron light cycle**

anarchy even Nero only dreamed of. You're also encouraged to, as the style judging panel treats your score pretty harshly if you just fall back on the same ol', same ol'. It's not quite as bad as *Devil May Cry 2*, but Ninja Theory want you to look good doing bad. Aside from posting your end of level numbers to the leaderboard, you'll also earn more Upgrade Points to pimp out your weapons the more fashionable your fatalities. Make no mistake: While relative noobs can get a lot out of *DmC*, this is still a game for the super hardcore. The absolute proof of this black pudding is to be found under 'Missions' on your main menu.

Once you finish the game on one of the starting three difficulties, you'll unlock increasingly more full-on ways of giving yourself RSI and then a brain aneurysm. The

zenith is 'Hell and Hell', which throws Dante against absolutely insane waves of enemies from the outset that all have standard health – and Dante dies in one hit. It's nuts, and it's made nuttier when you consider these rules also apply to the game's boss battles. Aside from being mind-altering showcases of visual insanity – you will never forget the Bob Barbas fight, ever – they're epic and escalate quickly, harking back to the relentless and abrupt challenge of the series' genesis in exaggerated form and maddening function. It's the little things, too: Every time you buy a healing item with some of your red souls, for example, the price goes up slightly on the next one.

By obliterating the worn exterior and souping up the interior, Ninja Theory has done the very difficult, and that is they've made *Devil May*

Cry relevant again. Not only that, they've also made it accessible where previously it was definitely not, both aesthetically and mechanically, without ignoring the hardcore crowd who've been up most nights chewing their fingers into nubs ever since this surprise initiative was announced.

It's not a perfect balancing act and can, by original definition, lean heavily in favour of "Argh My Brain," especially if you're attempting to get your head around using each and every weapon in tandem. *DmC*'s insistence that variety is the spice of ending life means its chaos, while steeped in the mashing of buttons, is so open to constant reinterpretation you might just find yourself back for a third and final time intent on conquering the highest difficulty. Good luck with that, you incredible maniac.  **Toby McCasker**

Final Say

PRESENTATION A visual mindsex of music video and Satanic verses, but so lurid it's sometimes painful.

SOUND Combichrist's industrial beatdowns are a highlight – a real and rare treat. The voice acting is pretty good too!

CONTROLS Purpose-built to make carving up 'em up with all your utensils intuitive, but the jumping bits suck a little.

REPLAY VALUE The clinically insane will get the most out of this. Tough stuff.

Verdict

Maybe you'll miss the old days and hit the Devil Trigger just to see new Dante with white hair – but you probably won't. Bangin'.

8

Dwark: such a Qweirdo. Never liked him



Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force

A Q in search of a You

The 10th anniversary of a videogame series as prolific as *Ratchet & Clank* is often awkward. The series isn't quite old enough to play on its legacy or offer up much in the way of fan service, but it's also not so young that it can afford to simply rest on its laurels.

Faced with the difficult question of how it should embrace its transitional period, Ratchet and Clank have engaged in the gaming equivalent of travelling to Europe for a year after high school to 'find themselves'. After last year's pleasant but slightly limp *All 4 One*, the terribly named *Q-Force* takes the pair off in another direction entirely.

Like *Quest for Booty* before it, *Q-Force* is being released at a budget price, but unlike that game it's far from a traditional *Ratchet & Clank* experience. Yes, you spend a lot of

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: STRATEGY
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: INSOMNIAC GAMES
PLAYERS: 1 - 4
RRP: \$24.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
ORCS MUST DIE!

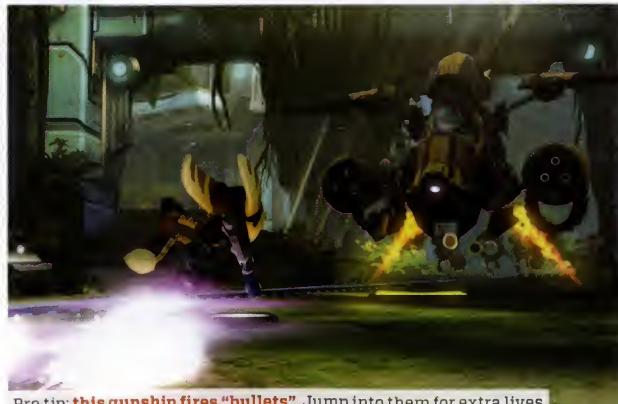


Ratchet headed for some leaves after laying some serious cable

time jumping and shooting across the game's five scant campaign levels, but there's also a tower defence element to contend with. Each level starts you off at a home base, and tasks you with going out and tackling the rest of the world as you see fit, scouting out collectables, upgrading your weapons, collecting bolts to spend on your defences, and ultimately taking down the generators within the level, so the shields around the enemy's base will drop and you can make an assault on it (the game's American title, *Ratchet & Clank: Full-Frontal Assault*, better conveys this gameplay model). Every now and then you'll be alerted to an enemy force trundling towards your base, which means that you'll need to get back there to protect it.

The platforming and combat that makes up the bulk of the *Q-Force* experience could be generously described as vanilla *Ratchet & Clank*. The levels are appropriately sprawling, never quite reaching a point of excessiveness but rewarding studious observation and exploration nevertheless, and blasting away at the bad guys with the series' mildly wacky weapons doesn't get tedious until towards the end of each level, when more powerful enemies appear.

Although actually getting to them can be pretty fun, the big fights in *Q-Force* are simply battles of attrition – find somewhere to hide, wait until the enemy is reloading to shoot them, eventually break cover to collect more ammo, and repeat until well past the point of boredom.



Pro tip: this gunship fires "bullets". Jump into them for extra lives



The tower defence gameplay is an interesting idea, but we're not entirely sure that Insomniac's heart was really in it. Building up enough resources to fend off enemy attacks actually requires quite a bit of foraging and attacking – most turrets, mines, shields and other weapons cost quite a bit to build – and the stress of juggling your adventures against the impending threats that often pop up when you uncover a new item or weapon within the level can be a bit much.

You can finish the game in less than four hours; expect to spend at least one of those hours swearing. By the end of each mission the influx of enemies is so intense, and your influx of income so insubstantial, that it's extremely easy to get overwhelmed. *Q-Force's* difficulty spikes are surprising and often very frustrating, but then the feeling of overcoming them is also pretty satisfying.

The game's structure makes a bit more sense if you're playing it with another player in the game's two player co-op. It makes a lot of sense to have one player foraging and seeking out weapons and generators while the other defends the base, or to scout out different areas of the map individually. There's a competitive multiplayer mode too, pitting you against an enemy team (it's either 1v1 or 2v2) in a desperate scrabble for resources, followed by an attack on the enemy base that must be balanced by first setting up a good defence.

These online modes can be great fun, but they have one glaring weakness – within a week of release, they were all but deserted online. Getting into a 2v2 competitive match – which is the only thing that anyone has been playing at all – has been a struggle since launch, which is never promising. If you've got

friends who also bought the game, this won't be a problem, but if you're hoping for something to play against random folk online we wouldn't expect this one to have a sudden huge surge in players. Still, if you don't mind the wait, competitive matches are great fun once you get in.

Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force doesn't pretend to be anything grand or innovative, nor does it aim for the same heights that the series has reached at its peak. It's a worrying indicator of where the future might rest for these characters – relegated, like Spyro (pre-*Skylanders*) and Crash Bandicoot, to a fairly lifeless series of reinventions that never manages to evoke that old glory. Don't worry, the duo isn't quite there yet – played under the right conditions, *Q-Force* is decent fun, and the price is certainly right.

By James O'Connor

The best way to thwart an enemy's plan: **throw a spanner in the jerks**



Ratchet & Who?

You have a choice between multiple characters in multiplayer, although if you're not a fan of the series you'll have no idea who most of them are. You have choices in the campaign as well, but we stuck with Ratchet because he was, by our estimate, the least cumbersome and annoying. Really, who wants to play as Qwark?

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Colourful, cheery, almost annoying but not quite – it's classic *Ratchet & Clank* through and through.

SOUND The music is inoffensive, but the sound bites start to grate pretty quickly.

CONTROLS The shooting feels responsive enough, and the platforming mostly works, although some jumps are tricky to judge.

REPLAY VALUE

Theoretically a solid chunk if you've got friends to play with, but the campaign is very short and there aren't many folks online.

Verdict

If you've got the ideal play conditions set up, *Q-Force* is pretty solid fun. It's the duo's weakest outing though, and the tower defence conceit is a little odd.

6

MOBA - short for Multiplayer Online Battle Arena. It's a genre that can be quite **hobbit forming**.



Not shown: the stench of a man who hasn't showered for **weeks**.

Guardians of Middle-earth

Bags being the mad goblin guy with bombs strapped to his ass



As its release coincides with that of *The Hobbit*, one could easily mistake this for a cynical, sub-par movie tie-in. Not so! It is, in fact, a game much closer to the kind of demanding online experience the PC set are routinely and often exclusively privy to. With this in mind, the opening and subsequent tutorials will treat you like an absolute moron. Stick with them – this is worth it.

The basic premise is this: pick some kind of *Lord of the Rings*-brand hero or villain to do battle with (a "Guardian"), and then go do said battle in five-a-side melees. The ultimate goal is to bust up the opposition's generic troops and defence towers on your way to smashing the heart of their army on the other end of the map. Making things interesting are the other people-controlled Guardians, because each favours either speed, strength, or sheer magical devastation and comes loaded with four unique cooldown moves.

Typically they're each built to fulfill a different archetypal role on the battlefield, like Enchanters such as Gandalf who lash status effects on crowds and Warriors like Sauron, who are built to slug it out one-on-one. While you'll definitely find someone to fit your playstyle, the tiering is pretty drastic and not always apparent. Picking Gollum, for instance, is obviously

the ultimate challenge; marching onto the battlefield as Uglúk of the Uruk-hai, on the other hand, suggests instant victory but he's easily one of the worst characters.

You'll also have to get used to having your ass handed to you to begin with, because while there is an Elite mode for higher-ranked players, 99 per cent of them will hang out in the regular Battlegrounds utterly crucifying nooblets.

The more you play, the more you'll rank up and the more helpful extras you'll get access to, like being able to stick stat-boosting gems to your belt and issuing life-saving commands that take ages to recharge. You can set up custom matches with dummy AI controlling the other peeps, and while good for practice the rewards you net post-match are a lot less than what you'd get for thrusting your sword at real live human beings.

Guardians of Middle Earth's early days are a bitch, and can be made bitchier by the fact it has no local matchmaking. If you get stuck with a horde of Americans, expect more deaths by lag than by thine enemy's blade. Push through this brief difficult period, and you'll be hooked. It's almost loathsome how addictive this can be. You ever laugh at all those *World of Warcraft* Gollums? That's gonna be you.

Toby McCasker

Info

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** STRATEGY **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. **DEVELOPER:** MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS **PLAYERS:** 1 - 10 **RRP:** \$59.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
AWESOME NAUTS

Final Say

PRESENTATION Looks like *Lord of the Rings*, and looks good.

SOUND The orcish Guardians get the best war cries by far. Mozzog FTW.

CONTROLS Movement is ponderous and fighting sluggish. Takes a while to get used to.

REPLAY VALUE You too will devolve into a greasy-haired troglodyte craving the precious (more game time).

Verdict

Unfair at first, unusually compelling later. Skip the inevitably awful game-of-the-movie and get into this.

8

Such a **wasteful stream of bullets**. Your onboard urinals must be hideous

Sine Mora

Mora this please

Time is life in *Sine Mora*. Literally. Rather than employ a conventional health meter mechanic, the way it works is, each stage in this sidescrolling shooter is divided into checkpoints and your goal is to get to the next checkpoint before your allotted time runs out. Shooting enemies earns you valuable seconds, getting hit depletes them.

Consequently, gameplay reduces to a frantic dash to kill as many enemies as possible while avoiding damage. In this way developer Digital Reality attenuates the basic elements of the genre, imbuing them with a sense of urgency that is wholly unique to *Sine Mora*. In short, it's a perpetual stress engine: the kind of game that makes you sweat and swear and smash (control pads).

Alleviating the tension somewhat is a familiar time-dilation mechanic: push the button and the world slows down, allowing you to neatly dodge enemy gunfire, and – in the case of bosses – more thoroughly take advantage of

exposed weak points. The rub is that using this power resets your score multiplier, which in turn affects your grade for the entire level. (The same is also true of using secondary weapons.)

Thus the hidden meaning of the game's title – *Sine Mora* is Latin for "without delay" – becomes evident. The ultimate goal is to play without delay – i.e. without slowing down time. Digital Reality gives you the power only so that you can learn not to use it. In postmodern parlance, the game deconstructs itself.

Sine Mora's narrative is equally postmodern, in that it is completely inscrutable and burdened with prose that regularly fluctuates between laughable and excruciating. It recalls preciously "intelligent" anime like *Ghost in the Shell* and *Evangelion*, which is appropriate given that Mahiro Maeda – who worked on the latter – designed many of the game's awe-inspiring boss encounters.

Given the genre to which it belongs, *Sine Mora* is an exquisitely good looking game, with crisp and vibrant 2.5-D stages populated by an array of memorable enemies and bosses. In truth, the levels are sometimes too beautiful for their own good, insofar as some of the busier elements – particularly in the factory and city stages – can often be distracting. Conversely, the soundtrack, by Akira "Silent Hill" Yamanaka is brilliantly understated. You don't always notice it, but when you do, you appreciate it.

It would be foolish of us to pretend that *Sine Mora* is for everyone. The fact is most of us simply don't have the time or patience necessary to properly appreciate a game that demands so much from the player. But for those who do: buy it. Buy it now.  **Dan Staines**



"All wings, this aerial assault, designated **Operation Breaking Wind**, will require serious follow-through from all of you." Sounds messy, sir

Info

FORMAT: PS3, PS VITA  

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: DIGITAL

REALITY/GRASSHOPPER

MANUFACTURE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$15.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
PIXELJUNK SIDESCRROLLER,
BULLET HELL SHOOTERS

Final Say

PRESENTATION Clean, crisp, and vibrant, with beautiful levels and fantastic diesel-punk bosses.

SOUND Pew pew pew! Bang! Whoosh! Also: a brilliant score by Akira Yamanaka.

CONTROLS Intuitive, responsive, customisable... no complaints here.

REPLAY VALUE Potentially enormous, provided you've got the patience. Truly mastering a game like *Sine Mora* can take years.

Verdict

An instant genre classic let down only slightly by a nonsense narrative.

8

Labyrinth Legends

"Hey, this looks like fu- oh I'm dead"



Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

DEVELOPER: CREAT STUDIOS

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: TBA

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
GETTING TROLLROLLED

Try playing a game from the 16 or, better yet, the 8-bit era and you'll be instantly floored by how crapping hard they all were. A top-down 2D dungeon crawler à la *Gauntlet*, this *Labyrinth Legends* is a painful reminder of how soft we've become.

It's made harder by the fact that rather than just being a case of marching in all directions and tonking things, your little questing bucket head man can also dash, block, pull cubes around to solve bastard puzzles, pimp himself out with bits of kit he finds in his travels, and twirl towards freedom (with his sword firmly extended). It tends to be a bit much within the confines of the simple retrogasm at

work, and the slipperiness of the controls make some of the move-blocks-around quandaries more annoying than they were already (nobody likes moving blocks around).

It's unforgiving as all hell, too: After you've barely scraped through a particularly insane dungeon, you might run afoul of a boss. This boss will, without fail, instantly kick your ass until you memorise his wicked ways, just like the old days. Then it's back to the start of everything with you.

How can something so cute be so potentially murderous? It's like a mogwai loitering by the fridge after midnight.

► **Toby McCasker**

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How can something so cute be so potentially murderous? It's like a mogwai loitering by the fridge after midnight.

► **Toby McCasker**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Deceivingly cutesy. Don't turn your back on it.

SOUND Every now and again, there's a mad cackle from nowhere. You are being trolled.

CONTROLS Can be a bit loose. Playing with the D-pad is a good idea.

REPLAY VALUE Not a hell of a lot after you're through, but you might never actually finish it.

Verdict

Prepare to feel inept and then quit. One for the hardcore (maybe).

6

Uncharted: Fight for Fortune

Call a bluff and raise the Drakes!

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: STRATEGY

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: BEND STUDIO /

ONE-LOOP GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$6.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
MAGIC: THE GATHERING

This really shouldn't work. A turn-based card game, *Uncharted: Fight for Fortune* sounds like scratchy marketing fluff that blasphemes the graphical guts of the Vita. It's odd then you should buy it.

If you've dodged *Magic: the Gathering* card craze you'll have exactly zero idea how these rituals are played out, and the game's barebones tutorial does surprisingly little to help. As it turns

out, *Uncharted: Fight for Fortune* isn't complicated, and after failing a few games you'll be all over it.

Players verse their deck of character cards against their opponent's while calling upon additional treasure and power-up cards to improve their attack and defence powers. Each character card possesses its own perks and can be combined with others for added potency.

Online play might be a bit of an issue though – we had difficulty setting it up most of the time. That aside, chalk one up for the completists here: Many of the cards are doubly effective if a player has found the corresponding treasure in *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*. The obvious downside of that is that it doesn't bode well for an equal playing field. Additionally the slow-paced nature of the game will turn some off with online players afforded 2 days to complete each turn! Thankfully keen online wizards can manage 8 games at any one time.

Uncharted: Fight for Fortune is hardly the reason you forked out for the Vita, but for \$6.95 it offers a dollop of chillaxed fun and is a lot easier than carrying around a real deck. ► **James Ellis**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Simple card graphics that could work on your smart phone. But they do the job nicely.

SOUND Appropriate sound effects and music compliment the game's minimalist audio. No Nolan North, though!

CONTROLS Use either the PS Vita touch screen or the face buttons to navigate about.

REPLAY VALUE It's unbalanced and luck-based gameplay may turn some off, but there's a cool 2-player "pass the Vita" mode for you and a buddy.

Verdict

An affordable little gem that will merrily kill your time.

7

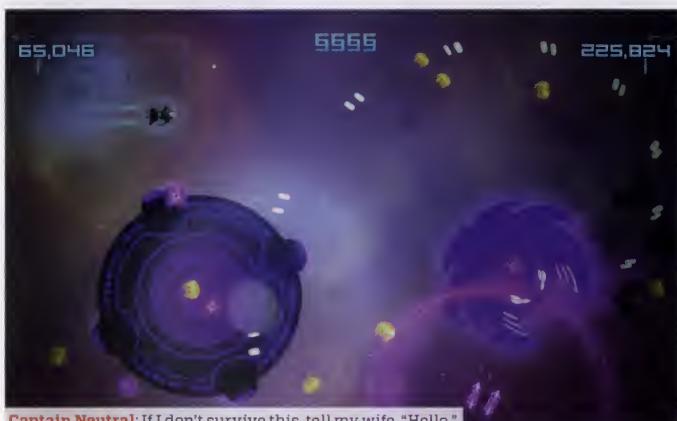
Big Sky: Infinity

To infinity, but then no further

Info

FORMAT: PS3, PS VITA  
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: RIPSTONE
DEVELOPER: BOSS BADDIE
PLAYERS: 1-4 (PS3), 1-2 (PS VITA)
RRP: \$15.95

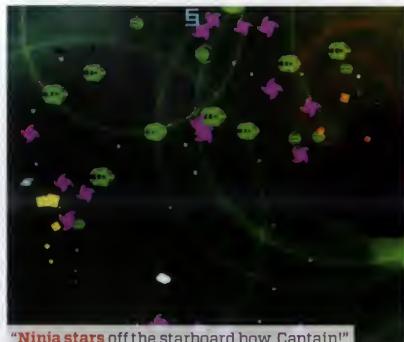
► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
SINE MORA



Captain Neutral: If I don't survive this, tell my wife, "Hello."

In theory, randomly generated levels are awesome. Being able to jump into a game and get a fresh experience every single time is an exciting idea, and one that several games have pulled off with aplomb. But some games treat the word 'random' with the same reverence and respect as the 14 year old kids you overhear prattling on at the mall. 'Look at these random levels! I got killed straight away in this one! So random!'

Big Sky: Infinity manages to toe the line between these two extremes, giving the player a fun shooter that surprises



"Ninja stars off the starboard bow, Captain!"

each time they jump in, but have coupled these good times with utterly broken scoring systems. Why should our latest effort in Arcade mode be judged against the session that opened immediately with a score multiplier zone that severely boosted the points we got from those first enemies? Isn't it unfair that this boss fight occurred so early on?

It gets worse in harder modes, which allow you to choose between one and three perks based on a roulette at the start of the game. The same scenarios pop up as you play, but eventually you might wish there was simply a singular path to carve your way through. *Big Sky* is fun in short bursts, but frustrating in the long run.  **James O'Connor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION A pretty groovy little shooter, although enemy bullets are often the same colour as your own, which is annoying.

SOUND Features one of the most irritating announcers around, but the music is fine.

CONTROLS It's a twin-stick shooter, and it works well enough. It's a tad floaty on PS Vita, perhaps, but not to a problematic extent.

REPLAY VALUE Good for picking up every now and then and having a bash at, even if it's not hugely addictive.

Verdict

A fun little shooter that would have perhaps kept us going for longer if it was better thought out.

6

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed

Super Sonic Kart

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: RACING
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: FIVE STAR
GAMES
DEVELOPER: SEGA / SUMO DIGITAL
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$54.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING



Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed is another fruity kart racer for Sony's handheld. Its smart design has been ported over from the PlayStation 3, but as a handheld iteration it still has to deal with a lack of blithesome split-screen fun.

Lack of couch tomfoolery notwithstanding, this is a robust racer that features all the popular perks of the genre with a stout collection of SEGA mascots and bizarre blow-ins like real-life Nascar champ Danica Patrick. What the?

The big new gimmick for *Transformed* over SEGA's previous *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* is that each of the game's 20 tracks is littered with rings that transform your vehicle into one of three forms – a car, boat, or plane. Each control differently, so adjusting from the drift-easy car into a boat that's bullied around by waves is a bit of a rough challenge, but it makes for unpredictable racing.

16 of the 20 tracks are brand new, and all feature impressive design that relishes in the new transformation mechanic and engage in real-time alterations between



Pro tip: accelerate to cause a sonic boom. Alternatively, crash

laps to keep things from flatlining. Unfortunately the game's weapons and items aren't up there with the genre's best and feel a little impotent and lacking in personality.

While this PS Vita version does nothing wrong, the PS3 version's split-screen option makes that the one to get.

 **James Ellis**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Vibrant primary technicolours and a consistent frame-rate make this a joy to gawk at.

SOUND A predictable cartoonish soundtrack, but it sells the fun well.

CONTROLS No interesting touchscreen controls, but the analogue stick works a treat.

REPLAY VALUE Varied content in the Career mode and online functionality are good, but they can't compete with split-screen functionality.

Verdict

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed is a tight little racing package with creative track design that rapturously riffs off its licence.

7

internet

NEWS, DLC,
REVIEWS

► WHAT'S NEW

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

'80s platform-jumping legends the Giana Sisters are back, thanks to the crowd-funding magic of Kickstarter. *Giana Sisters: Twisted Dreams* is out now on PC, and a PS3 port will be available to download early in 2013. The game mechanics have had a serious makeover – Giana can now morph between her 'punk' and 'cute' forms at any time, with each mode having unique abilities.

Another coveted PC port is inching towards a PS3 launch: *Terraria*. Inspired in part by *Minecraft*, *Terraria* facilitates multi-player RPG mayhem in ginormous customisable 2D worlds, with stacks of gear upgrades and totally bonkers boss battles. Console gamers have been promised 'new content.'

Meanwhile, Bethesda has pearly off another news nugget concerning the interminable struggle to bring *Skyrim* DLC to PS3.

The developer is still wrestling with those RimLag-related "technical difficulties," but has re-aligned its release priorities. Considering that *Dragonborn* is by far the biggest and best DLC pack, they've bumped it to the head of the queue. "Once it's ready to go for everyone, we'll continue our previous work on *Hearthfire* and *Dawnguard* for PS3. Each one takes a lot of time and attention to work well in all circumstances and all combinations of DLC."



Twisted Sisters

The *Cross Controller Pack* is out now for *LittleBigPlanet 2*. Once this software upgrade has stitched itself into place, you'll be able to use a PS Vita as a game controller, adding the extra benefits of touch controls and an entire second screen for the action to play out on. The pack includes a campaign replete with puzzles designed to take full advantage of the new feature, as well as all the tools you'll need to craft your own Cross Controller-compatible content.

Oh, and *Knytt Underground*, the resplendent upgrade of the platform-jumping classic, is out now for PS Vita and PS3. 1,800 rooms = a serious challenge.



VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: OPS trio of hits



LCD SOUNDSYSTEM - DAFT PUNK IS PLAYING AT MY HOUSE

They've since disbanded, which is a shame, but they're right here, which is ace.



PENDULUM - SLAM

The ever so popular 'chubby bloke strips off and goes mental' routine. Unleash your inner lunatic like this guy. He should be your new hero.



FOO FIGHTERS - LEARN TO FLY

Dave Grohl is an actor in a musician's skin. He also owns all the moustaches. Jack Black, however, is a buffoon in a buffoon's skin, so we're equal.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available *free* on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 30,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation Network



NI NO KUNI DEMO

Dive into two different levels from the game and the chance to tackle two of the game's bosses; Guardian of the Woods and Moltaan. We gave this gem a 9 so it's definitely worth a look.



BIG SKY INFINITY DEMO

An intense twin stick shooter that organically adapts its difficulty level to your performance and keeps you on the edge of your seat. Plus, stereoscopic 3D.



BATTLEFIELD 3 AFTERMATH

Four earthquake-ravaged maps for multiplayer, three vehicles, a crossbow, the scavenger game mode, 10 new assignments to unlock and 10 unique dog tags.

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



MASS EFFECT

The original finally makes its way to the PS3. Discover Shepard's beginnings on the SS Normandy while preventing a madman from causing galactic destruction. It's \$23.95 and 10.5GB.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

A PS2 classic! Set in the fictional city of Los Santos in the early 90's our man CJ must save his family and take back control of the streets. \$21.95, and 4.2GB.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation® Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Phillip Lyons
Game: *The Walking Dead*
 Trophy: The Walking Dead
An awesome game, a cracking story and what an ending!



Hugo Kinnaird
Game: *Saints Row The Third*
 Trophy: Third and 30
Staying in Steelport for 30 hours is boring when you finish all missions in 25.



Andrew Maddock
Game: *LEGO Lord of the Rings*
 Trophy: One does not simply... Walked into Mordor. I laughed.



GENRE: SHOOTER RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: BETHESDA SOFTWARES DEVELOPER: ARKANE STUDIOS PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$8.45

DLC >

Dishonored - Dunwall City Trials

Killing against the clock

If there's one thing we love more than sending vicious hordes of rats to do our deadly bidding, it's a good challenge. Enter *Dishonored: Dunwall City Trials* – the first add-on pack for one of 2012's surprise hits.

Disappointingly, these trials have nothing to do with the tale of everybody's favourite masked murderer, instead presenting 10 standalone challenge maps, broken into four categories: stealth, mobility, action and puzzle. Each category is distinctly different from the last and aims to put your skills with Corvo to the test. But while some set you right back into a familiar groove, others seem at odds with the core

foundations the original campaign only just established.

Mystery foe, for example, is classic *Dishonored*, putting you on the hunt for a target. Before you can strike though, you must attain four clues for confirmation – all with a strict zero tolerance for alerts.

Then, in direct contrast, you have a straightforward, by the books wave-based survival mode. Even with the game's enjoyable combat, it doesn't avoid the fact that this type of gameplay has been mirrored countless times before. As a unified package, it can feel like a bit of a mixed bag, but there's still enough challenge within to keep you

chugging along.

Plus, for those who like showing off, Arkane has also included full leaderboard support, allowing you to compare times and scores with the wider killer community.

If you've been desperate for another round of stabsies, *Dunwall City Trials* will fulfill your bloody desire, especially for the reasonable asking price. We were just hoping for something a little meatier.  **Adam Guetti**

VERDICT

It might be mindless filler, but it's entertaining filler nonetheless.



PlayStation® Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II
DEVELOPER: TРЕYARCH / INFINITY WAR
PLAYERS: 1 - 16
This year's game is a revolution, ditching old conventions as well as lowering the entry barrier to competitive multiplayer. It's never been so good, and Zombies is a fine diversion too.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
PLAYERS: 2 - 8
Excellent. You'll spend most of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds slim it's indescribably addictive. Believe us when we say it's worth it just for this alone.



JOURNEY
DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY
PLAYERS: 2
Alright, so it's limited but you've never played a game like this online. You'll be amazed by the level of cooperation you'll share with your fellow travellers, and it'll remind you that benevolence resides in the heart of strangers.



FIFA 13
DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1 - 22
Football Club is just one reason to get on board here, where real life and your digital career mesh seamlessly into one. As usual, the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD 3
DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1 - 24
You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction of storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves, so play friendly or don't play at all.

Tourist Survival Guide

Rook Islands is a tropical paradise gone to hell, but you can claw back some salvation. We'll give you the tools to make it easy and fun. Welcome to the jungle, mister...

THE THREE BEST TROPHIES AND HOW TO GET THEM

Free Fall

You have to free fall more than 100m to get this. Doing it over land is suicide, and a few spots – including the cenote where you first meet Buck – won't trigger it. Best bet, grab a hang glider from X: 805.4, Y: 746.4 and fly it out over the ocean. Look down, release, and feel the rush.



Say Hi to the Internet

That cover art isn't just there to look cool – it's a thing. Go to X: 619.7, Y: 558.2 and look up the beach for the people hanging in the trees. Look down, and you'll find a missing Hollywood star. Hit **Ⓐ** to get the trophy.



Unheard

Is what it says it is: not setting off the alarm when taking over an outpost. Best bet is to shoot it. Once you get this, you're part of the way to clearing the outposts effectively, and netting yourself a tidy XP bonus. Do it from a distance and keep yourself out of the way of guns/teeth.



CLEARING THE OUTPOSTS

Taking over outposts for the Rakyat will make a substantial portion of the map easier to get around without being hassled by pirates on the North Island. On the South Island you have the luxury of being in disguise as a soldier, so you can walk among the troops, taking photos and getting the lay of the land. Here's how to make the North Island pirate-free.

Do it quietly

Capture an outpost without being seen and you'll earn 1500XP. If you're detected, but manage to silence the alarm before it can be raised, you'll get 550XP. Take it over the hard way, with reinforcements inbound, and you'll get 500XP. You'd have to get 38 – 40 headshots at 25XP a piece to make up for the deficit.



Turn your camera on

Use an Enhanced Perception combat syringe (1 x Crimson Leaf) to see enemies and explosives in an outpost and a Hunter syringe (1 x Amber Leaf). Find yourself some high ground or a decent vantage point, and get the camera out (press up on the d-pad). Follow all the enemies and any animals in cages you can and tag them, so that there are no surprises. Cap snipers and RPG guys first – they have the best eyesight and greatest range.



Use the environment to your advantage

If you use the Hunter syringe and Combat syringe and see an animal, shoot the red piece of material holding the cage door closed and let the beast take out a few chumps. Bears, leopards and tigers are the best. Similarly, explosive barrels and the huge gas canisters have a decent blast radius, and the Hunter syringe will show those while the syringe effect is active.



FRYING THE TIGERS AND BEARS

You arrive on the island with barely enough room to hold more than a few coins and one pea shooter permanently stuck in your hand. Luckily, there's an island's worth of fauna that's waiting to be made into a bigger purse, holster and rucksack. Here's what you'll need.

What it is	What you'll need	What it is	What you'll need
Weapon Holster		Throwable Packs	
Simple (2 weapons)	1x Goat Skin	Simple (4 slots per grenade)	2x Goat Skin
Rugged (3 weapons)	2x Deer Hide	Rugged	2x Deer Hide
Heavy Duty (4 weapons)	2x Shark Skin	Heavy Duty	3x Komodo Dragon Skin
Wallets		Extended	1x Blood Komodo Dragon Leather (Path of the Hunter)
Simple (\$2,000)	1x Pig Hide	Munition Pouches	
Rugged (\$4,000)	2x Cassowary Leather	Simple (3 slots per munition)	2x Goat Skin
Heavy Duty (\$6,000)	2x Shark Skin	Rugged	2x Leopard Skin
Extended (\$10,000)	1x One Horn Buffalo Hide (Path of the Hunter)	Heavy Duty	2x Bear Skin
Loot Rucksacks		Extended	1x White Belly Tapir (Path of the Hunter)
Simple (32 slots)	2x Boar Hide	Flamethrower Fuel Sling	
Rugged (48 slots)	2x Tapir Hide	Simple	2x Dog Skin
Heavy Duty (64 slots)	4x Dingo Pelt	Rugged	2x Boar Hide
Extended (96 slots)	1x Undying Bear Leather (Path of the Hunter)	Heavy Duty	2x Komodo Dragon Skin
Syringe Kit		Extended	1x Yellow Necked Cassowary Leather (Path of the Hunter)
Simple (5 slots)	1x Pig Hide	Rocket Pack	
Rugged (7 slots)	3x Pig Hide	Simple	1x Deer Hide
Heavy Duty (9 slots)	2x Leopard Skin	Rugged	4x Dingo Pelt
Extended (12 slots)	1x Black Panther Leather (Path of the Hunter)	Heavy Duty	3x Tiger Skin
Ammo Pouches		Arrow Quiver	
Simple	2x Boar Hide	Simple (10 simple & 10 special)	1x Goat Skin
Rugged	2x Buffalo Skin	Rugged (15 simple & 10 special)	2x Tapir Hide
Heavy Duty	2x Tiger Skin	Heavy Duty (20 simple & 10 special)	2x Bear Skin
Extended	1x Golden Tiger Leather (Path of the Hunter)	Extended (30 simple & 10 special)	1x Maneater Shark's Fin (Path of the Hunter)

PATH OF THE HUNTER QUESTS

Golden Tiger	Bow	North Island, Mosquito Yard
Black Panther	Bow	North Island, Orphan Point
White Belly Tapir	Bow	North Island, Rust Yard
Yellow Neck Cassowary	M-700	North Island, AM12 Outpost
One Horn Buffalo	M133	North Island, Camp Murder
Blood Komodo	Bow	North Island, Cliffside Overlook
Undying Bear	M133	North Island, Cradle Gas
Maneater Shark	Bow	North Island, Kell's Boat Repairs

CHEAT THE ENDING

Small spoiler: *Far Cry 3* has two endings. You'll come to a 'point of no return' and it'll be clearly signposted. Save your game at this point, then let Autosave keep your progress up to date from here on out. Ending over, go to the 'Load Game' option, and select your actual save. You'll be able to play back through and watch the ending you didn't try before.



► MUST WATCH

Hotel Transylvania

(PG)

DIRECTOR: GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY
CAST: ADAM SANDLER, SELENA GOMEZ, ANDY SAMBERG, KEVIN JAMES, FRAN DRESCHER, STEVE BUSCEMI
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

Genndy Tartakovsky is one of the true master animators of our age. The creator of *Dexter's Laboratory*, the phenomenal 2D *Clone Wars* cartoon, the unfairly cancelled *Sym-Bionic Titan*, and the fantastic *Samurai Jack*, Tartakovsky has now made the leap to feature film animation, and he's nailing it right out of the gate. The story is assembled from a rapid-fire succession of gags spoofing the horror movies of old, and is presented via energetic movement and adroit direction. Small children will delight at the bright-eyed character designs and goofy antics, while supervising adults will pick up on more than a few gags directed at the cynical and world-weary. In fact, it's so good that you'll forget the main character is voiced by that soulless hack Adam 'Jack and Jill' Sandler. Top stuff from start to finish.

Watch this if you like *Dexter's Laboratory*

Verdict A delightful animated romp, and proof that vampire movies needn't suck.

8



“It's so good that you'll forget the main character is voiced by Adam 'Jack and Jill' Sandler”

**The Campaign**

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JAY ROACH **CAST:** ADAM MACKAY, JAY ROACH, WILL FERRELL, ZACH GALIFIANAKIS
AVAILABLE: (RENT/OWN) \$7.99/\$24.99 4GB (HD), \$6.99/\$19.99 1GB (SD)

Will Ferrell is cast perfectly as Cam Brady, the kind of intractable, insufferable career political hack who stinks up parliaments and opinion pages alike with their power-hungry inanities. He squares off in an electoral fight to the death with Marty Huggins (Zach Galifianakis – *The Hangover*, *Tim and Eric's Billion Dollar Movie*), and their race to the bottom triggers a cascade of escalating gross-out gags involving baby punching and televised cuckoldry.

Unfortunately, the black comedy gives way to feel-good mush in the final act. Not a satire scalpel; more of a blunt instrument.

Verdict It's no *Anchorman 2*, but it has all the vulgarity you expect from Ferrell's rat pack.

7

PlayStation® Store

► TOP TEN
Movies on Demand

- 1 **Ted** Universal Pictures
- 2 **The Dark Knight Rises** Warner Bros.
- 3 **Brave** Walt Disney Pictures
- 4 **Snow White & the Huntsmen** Universal Pictures
- 5 **The Amazing Spider-Man** Sony Pictures
- 6 **Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter** 20th Century Fox
- 7 **Ice Age: Continental Drift** 20th Century Fox
- 8 **Magic Mike** Roadshow Films
- 9 **Silent House** Icon Films
- 10 **Chernobyl Diaries** Roadshow Films

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The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!





The Watch (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: AKIVA SCHAFER **CAST:** BEN STILLER, VINCE VAUGHN, JONAH HILL, RICHARD AYOADE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Oh dear. The newish Hollywood tradition of high-budget action/comedy has strayed from the winning formula of *Tropic Thunder* and has become, instead, self-satire. *The Watch* flexes its budget without resulting in a greater strength of laughs. Serial loser Evan (Stiller) feels compelled to form a neighbourhood watch in sleepy Glenview, Ohio, after a staff member is inexplicably and gruesomely killed. The resultant ragtag group becomes entangled in various hijinks before eventually stumbling upon an alien plot to take over the world. When this talented troupe fires on all cylinders, you'll laugh, but the jokes play second fiddle to a generic plotline that errs on the side of favouring drama over yucks.

Watch this if you like: *The Other Guys*

Verdict There are a handful of amusing scenes, but the collective comedic talent is wasted here.

4



Waiting in the Summer (M)

DIRECTOR: TATSUYUKI NAGAI **CAST:** HARUKA TOMATSU, NOBUNAGA SHIMAZAKI, AI KAYANO, AYA HISAKAWA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

A study in low-impact romantic tension and ponderous nostalgia, once again manifested through high school lads and lasses. The show's merits include the highly detailed background paintings, the eye-pleasing soft edges of the character designs, and the way the chicks are all moe blob variants, yet posses just enough plausible human personality traits to maintain the suspension of disbelief. Oh: and there's a naive alien chick who's always pushing her knockers where they don't belong. Part story, part travelogue back to an idealised past of youthful wonder.

Watch this if you like: *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*

Verdict Nostalgic teen dramedy with a light sci-fi zesting, and a side of norgs.

8

Looper (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: RIAN JOHNSON **CAST:** BRUCE WILLIS, JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT, EMILY BLUNT, JEFF DANIELS **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Writer/director Rian Johnson is back with what's arguably a better film than his 2005 debut *Brick*. Johnson's go-to leading man Joseph Gordon-Levitt embodies Joe, a near-future hitman whose job it is to assassinate targets sent back through time. When a future version of Joe (Willis) is sent back to the past and escapes execution by his younger self, both Joes find themselves on the run; from each other and the thugs out to end their lives. *Looper* is filled with fantastic performances across the board, and shows the big-budget boys that quality sci-fi can be done on a relatively modest budget, all the while still including plenty of action, great characters and plenty of memorable scenes.

Watch this if you like: *District 9*

Verdict The paradoxes may make you go cross-eyed, but it's still a triumph worth multiple viewings.

9



Persona 4: The Animation (M)

DIRECTOR: SEIJI KISHI **CAST:** AMI KOSHIMIZU, DAISUKE NAMIKAWA, SHOWTAKE MORIKUBO, YUI HORIE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Persona 4: The Animation whisks the viewer away to a town where an eerie fog conceals the sins and psychoses of the eccentric locals. Yu Narukami is new in town, but soon finds himself bonding with his fellow students thanks to a common interest: his ability to warp through television screens and into a Silent Hill-esque hell dimension where nightmares become flesh. This series is an adaptation of the cult hit RPG, and isn't shy about reminding you – the interstitials mimic game menus, and the BGM will often change abruptly to ape the games scene changes. True to the source material, but feels a little sterile.

Watch this if you like: *Serial Experiments Lain*

Verdict Gothic psychological horror in Spooksville, Japan. Stay a while. Stay forever!

7

Lockout (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JAMES MATHER, STEPHEN ST. LEGER **CAST:** GUY PEARCE, MAGGIE GRACE, VINCENT REGAN, JOSEPH GILGUN, PETER STOMARE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Think: "Taken in space". Snow (Pearce) is framed and wrongly convicted for an unpatriotic act when, in an *Escape From L.A.*-like plot, he's offered his freedom as long as he can rescue the president's daughter from a space prison. The prison has been overrun by maximum-security convicts, and sarcastic Snow begrudgingly accepts what is essentially a suicide mission. There are some decent action sequences and, by far, the best thing about *Lockout* is Pearce's Snake Plissken-like portrayal of Snow. Unfortunately, that's not enough to save the film from dragging, despite its short runtime.

Watch this if you like: *Escape from L.A.*

Verdict A stellar performance from Guy Pearce isn't enough to save this sci-fi film. Potential: wasted.

5



Majikoi -Oh! Samurai Girls (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: KEITARO MOTONAGA **CAST:** HIROSHI KAMIYA, AKANE TOMONAGA, HYOUSEI, SHIZUKA ITOU, YUKO GOTO, YUU ASAKAWA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

This 12-episode series offers a novel take on hyper-active high school antics. Naturally, the damsels have neon hair and amply animated badonkadonks, only they're all distantly descended from medieval samurai warlords, and use their lineage as an excuse to resolve petty disputes by staging re-enactments of grand, *Total War*-style battles. Throw in the standard array of tsundere/yandere harem show personality archetypes, martial arts techniques with borderline supernatural powers, and the odd robot and cyborg, and you've got an agreeable sex comedy romp. Or is that rump?

Watch this if you like: *Ikkai Tousen*

Verdict Buxom teens battle for love and glory with samurai weapons and naked sexual charisma.

7

► MUST SEE

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (M)

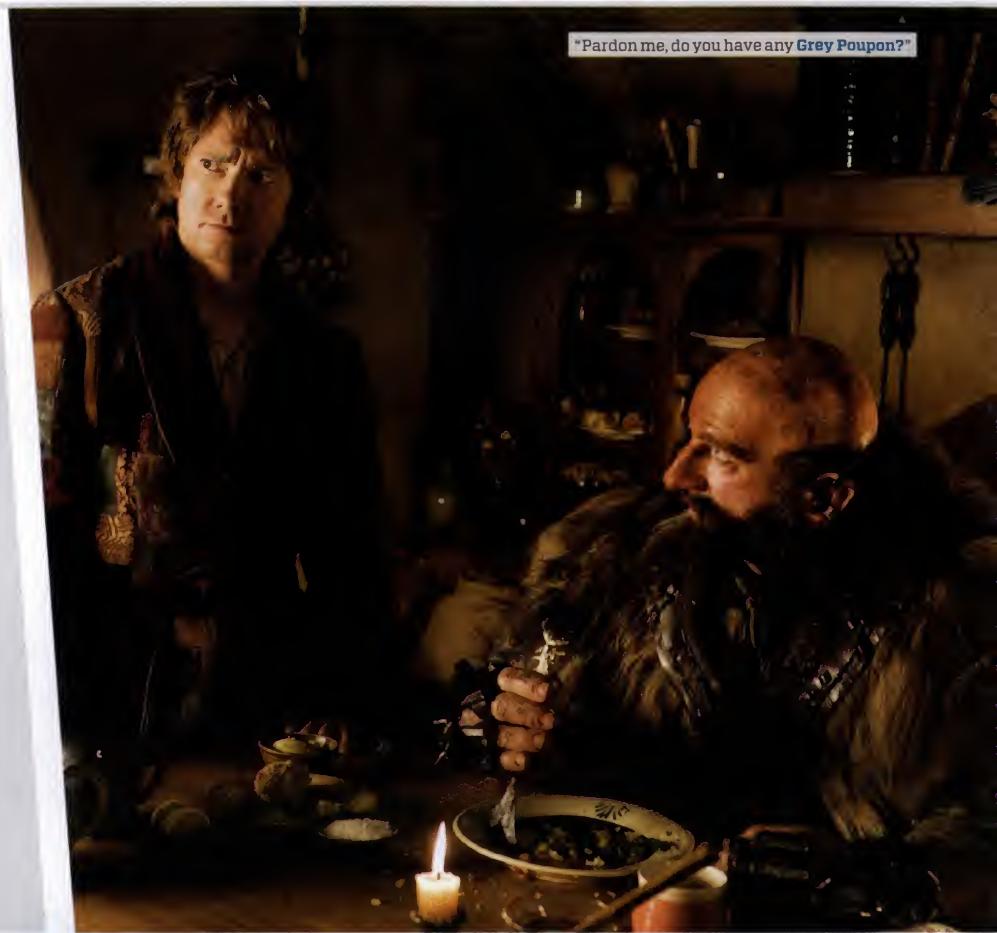
DIRECTOR: PETER JACKSON **CAST:** IAN MCKELLAN, MARTIN FREEMAN, RICHARD ARMITAGE, IAN HOLM, ANDY SERKIS, HUGO WEAVING, CATE BLANCHETT, CHRISTOPHER LEE, ELIJAH WOOD **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

After losing their ancestral home to a vicious dragon, a company of dwarves set out to reclaim their birthplace. All they need is a sneak thief to round out this fellowship. Accompanying wizard Gandalf the Grey believes this vital role can be filled by the unlikeliest of heroes, an unassuming young hobbit by the name of Bilbo Baggins.

Martin Freeman (*Sherlock*) is perfectly cast as Bilbo, bringing enormous sensitivity to a sheltered Halfling filled with doubt and dread. Hugo Weaving, Cate Blanchett, and Andy Serkis also shine in their roles, but the mind-blowing special effects are the true star of the film.

The higher frame-rate available at select cinemas (48 fps opposed to the usual 24) brings with it startlingly crispness to the 3D graphics and makes each scene seem hyper real, much like when viewing a Blu-ray for the first time. It's nearly impossible to tell where reality ends and the effects begin. If you see one film over the festive season make sure it's this one.

Watch this if you like *The Lord of the Rings*



"Hey, terrorist! Terrorise This!"



Zero Dark Thirty (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: KATHERYNE BIGELOW **CAST:** JESSICA CHASTAIN, JASON CLARKE, KYLE CHANDLER, MARK STRONG, JAMES GANDOLFINI **IN CINEMAS:** JANUARY 31

Zero Dark Thirty is an interesting, albeit lengthily, attempt to personalise the hunt for Osama bin Laden by seeing it through the eyes of a CIA analyst (Jessica Chastain) with a personal stake in his capture. While it is beautifully shot and well crafted it doesn't quite hit the mark.

The film is packed with riveting performances, particularly from the rock solid Mark Strong, the brilliant Jason Clarke, and a mesmerising turn by Reda Kateb as the brutally tortured detainee Ammar. Clocking in at almost three hours the pacing

drags in the last act, though considering the pages of history it's trying to condense not much could have been cut without detriment to the plot.

Given the subject matter and the audience's fore-knowledge of the end result (the death of Osama bin Laden) it's difficult for the film to deeply resonate with those of us not living in the United States. Yet even if it fails to connect with the audience on an emotional level, one can still appreciate the technical execution of Bigelow's sprawling revenge flick. A grisly spectacle.

"Pardon me, do you have any Grey Poupon?"



Three Girls, One Hack

This is 40 (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JUDD APATOW **CAST:** PAUL RUDD, LESLIE MANN, JASON SEGEL, MEGAN FOX, CHARLYNE LI, MAUDE APATOW, ALBERT BROOKS **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Judd Apatow's directorial-led biography continues in *This is 40* and is by far his weakest offering to date. Expanding on two side characters seen in *Knocked Up* it investigates long-term relationships, impending mid-life crises, and how it all affects the family unit.

Intermittently amusing, the film feels more like a selection of skits loosely held together by a flimsy over-arching plot. There is little conflict and even less redemption and resolution. You care very little for the characters and the usually dependable Paul Rudd seems to be merely going through the motions.

A staple of an Apatow flick is his wife Leslie Mann in a supporting role and while she is inoffensive in small doses she doesn't have the acting chops or screen presence to headline a film. Likewise, Apatow's daughters flounder in their roles. It makes you wonder why he hasn't moved into the realm of reality TV rather than producing this kind of predictable and clichéd mediocrity.

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Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

JAN 2013

Anarchy Reigns

Genre: Action Distributor: Five Star Games Date: Jan 10



DmC: Devil May Cry

Genre: Action Distributor: AIE Date: Jan 15

Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Jan 24



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: Feb 21



FEB 2013



Crysis 3
Genre: Action Distributor: EA Date: TBA Feb

Dead Space 3
Genre: Action Distributor: EA Date: Feb 7

MARCH 2013

Metro Last Light

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ Date: TBA Mar

South Park: The Stick of Truth
Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: TBA Mar

PRE-ORDER BioShock Infinite
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Games Date: Mar 26



► COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Tomb Raider

Step into the dark origin story of Lara Croft after she shipwrecks on a mysterious island populated by vicious natives and exotic ecosystems. But be prepared to hunt for your food and scavenge for equipment as she grows into the sexy treasure hunter we all know and love.

The Collector's Edition Includes:

- Lara Croft figurine 8-inches
- Double sided island map and poster 15 x 19
- Survival tin
- Art of Tomb Raider 4.6 x 7.5 inch book
- Survival pouch 4 x 6 inch
- Weapon pack DLC
- Ten track score

EB Games \$138 Estimated dispatch date: 5/3/13



Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Mar 5



Splinter Cell Blacklist
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBA Mar

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBA Mar

APRIL 2013



Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBA Mar



Injustice: Gods Among Us
Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBA Apr

MAY 2013

Remember Me
Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Capcom Date: TBA May

► LATE PREORDER!

Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

It's the magical tale of a young boy called Oliver who sets off on a journey into a beautiful parallel world to revive his recently deceased mother! Oliver can collect the creatures he meets along the way and they can also take his place in battle. As Studio Ghibli helms the game's visuals expect 40+ hours of visual delight and dumbstruck awe with one of the best looking games on the PS3.



EB Games \$88 Estimated dispatch date: 24/1/13

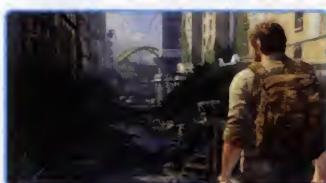


Fuse
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: TBA Mar

PS Vita Releases

PSVITA
PlayStation Vita

TBA 2013



The Last of Us
Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Sony Date: TBA May 7



Star Wars 1313
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision
Date: TBA 2013

TBA 2013



Grand Theft Auto V
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013



Agent
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013

GRID 2
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Lost Planet 3
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBA 2013

Dust 514
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Brothers in Arms Furious 4
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Doom 4
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC
Date: TBA 2013



Arcania: Gothic 4
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Beyond: Two Souls
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Dragonball Z Budokai HD Collection
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Prey 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: AIE
Date: TBA 2013

Deadpool
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision
Date: TBA 2013

Watch Dogs
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013



Dragon's Crown
Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Final Fantasy Versus XIII
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Persona 4: Arena
Genre: Fighting Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Tales of Xillia
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2
Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBA 2013

Rainbow Six: Patriots
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

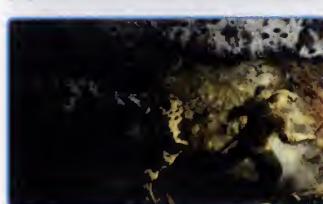
Devil's Third
Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Warrior's Lair
Genre: Action-RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Serious Sam: BFE
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Final Fantasy XIV Online
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Backbreaker Vengeance
Genre: Sports Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013



Dark Souls II
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013



Persona 4: Golden
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date:
February 22

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA Feb

BioShock
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K
Date: TBA 2013

Dust 514
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Final Fantasy X
Genre: RPG Distributor: Square-
Enix Date: TBA 2013

Killzone: Mercenary
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Zone of the Enders HD Collection
Genre: Action Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBA 2013

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Rugby Challenge
Genre: Sports Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Castlevania Mirror of Fate
Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Konami Date: TBA
2013



When Vikings Attack!
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Phantasy Star Online 2
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Tearaway
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Soul Sacrifice
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Dragon's Crown
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

COLLECTOR'S EDITION Aliens: Colonial Marines



The Collector's Edition includes:

- High Quality Powerloader Figurine
- USCM Dossier
- Four Playable Movie Characters
- Additional Marines Character Customisation Options
- Ripley's Flamethrower
- Exclusive Multiplayer Weapons
- Sonic Electronic Ball Breakers
- Phase Plasma Rifle
- Exclusive Game Level
- USCM Academy Firing Range
- Mission Brief

- USS Sephora Schematic
- Recruitment Card
- LV-426 Recon Photo
- USCM Iron-on Badges
- USCM Graduation Certificate.

Created by Gearbox Software, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is a shooter steeped in the eerie, claustrophobic and terrifying atmosphere that made the *Aliens* films successful worldwide. It's well worthy of motion-tracking.

EB Games \$118 Estimated dispatch date: 12/2/13

index

ACTION

Alien Breed 3: Descent
TEAM 17
Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do enough to improve upon its predecessors.

Armored Core V
FROM SOFTWARE
Repetitive and needlessly complex. Building 'bots is cool, though that's about all there is.

Army of Two: The 40th Day
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.

Asura's Wrath
CYBERCONNECT 2
Gorgeous to look at, but there's not much game here and it's packed with QTEs. Bleh.

Bayonetta
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Beyond Good & Evil HD
UBISOFT
Still one of the most charming games ever.

Binary Domain
YAKUZA STUDIO
More than competent shooter with cool ideas and gunplay but embarrassing dialogue.

BloodRayne: Betrayal
WAYFWARD
A classy and colourful beat-'em-up that rewards exploration.

Brave: The Videogame
DISNEY INTERACTIVE
A family title smarter than the average bear.

BreakQuest: Extra Evolution
BEATSHAPES
Brickbreakingly boring.

Castle Crashers
THE BEHEMOTH
Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon RPG-action. Best played in co-op.

Child of Eden
Q ENTERTAINMENT
You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster.

The Club
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Dead Rising 2: Off The Record
CAPCOM VANCOUVER
If you missed it first time around, grab it now.

Dead to Rights: Retribution
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry HD Collection
CAPCOM
A bit lazy. 720p gameplay, low-res cutscenes.

Devil May Cry 4
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack.

Double Dragon
Neon
WAYFWARD
Scott Pilgrim does it better.

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon
VICTIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Breathtakingly beautiful and inventive.

The Expendables 2 Videogame
ZOOFLY
A disaster from start to finish. Booooooring.

Final Fight: Double Impact
PROPER GAMES
Forget about *Magic Sword*, play *Final Fight*.

Galaga Legions DX
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Bullet hell made pretty.

Ghostbusters: The Video Game
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Heavy Fire: Afghanistan
MASTIFF
A technical travesty. Full of brown.



Hitman: Absolution
DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1

"Cleverly balances stealth and action for both newbies and long-time fans, while the narrative challenges even the most pacifistic player to pull the trigger."

House of the Dead: Overkill - Extended Cut
HEADSTRONG GAMES
Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge
INXILE
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

Jetpack Joyride
HALFBRICK / BEATSHAPES
Insanely addictive and an instant buy if you haven't played it on smartphones already.

Just Cause 2
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days
IO INTERACTIVE
Clever visuals, dull game.

Metacritic: radical hatred of the games you like
Website: metacritic.com Game: *Black Ops II* Reviewer: Nichtswisser Score: 0
It's time for warmed up re-serve leftovers again, it's *Call of Duty* time...the "newest" *CoD* barely released already feels older than my grandma. Avoid like the plague or they will continue pumping out this crap twice a year with the same ancient engine until the end of times. Support devs with your money that actually try to make new and interesting games instead of re-warming the same old crap that lost all taste ages ago.

Lollipop Chainsaw
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Witless, puerile, and irredeemably dull. You'd be right to expect more from Suda51.

Midway Arcade Origins
MIDWAY
Over 30 different ways to waste your time. You're better off burning \$40.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma
TEAM NINJA
Violent but ace, despite its age.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock-hard title but the gore's been cut.

One Piece: Pirate Warriors
TECMO KOEI
Dynasty Warriors in a new skin. Cool story, but you can play this with your buttocks.

Pac-Man Championship Edition DX
NAMCO BANDAI
A revolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotic.

PixelJunk SideScroller
Q-GAMES
Old-school fun meets new age design.

Prototype 2
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
Dumb plot, fantastic gory action. Loads of fun.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Chaotic and confusing with four players, and a bit dull in single player.

Red Faction: Armageddon
VOLITION, INC.
Brown, corridor-based action that will leave you snoring. Get *Guerrilla* instead.

Red Faction: Guerrilla
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do.

Renegade Ops
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
A sleek twin-stick shooter with split screen!

Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles
CAPCOM
On-rails lightgun rehash of *Resi 2* with bits of *Resi* thrown in. The too-shaky camera sucks.

Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles
CAPCOM
Better camera and broader subject matter that includes *Resi 0*. Uses Move.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City
SLANT SIX GAMES
Buggy in single player, but gets better online with mates. Unresponsive and ugly at times.



Retro City Rampage
DEVELOPER: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT
DISTRIBUTOR: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT
PLAYERS: 1

"A fiendish send-up of *GTA* with more references than you can poke a DeLorean at. Challenging, tight, addictive – and it works on both PS3 and PS Vita."

Saints Row 3
VOLITION, INC.
Big, brash and unapologetically dumb fun.

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World
UBISOFT
Distinctly old-school. Needs co-op partners.

Shank 2
KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
Better combat but disappointing graphics compared to the original. Still cool, though.

Skylanders Giants
TOYS FOR BOB
As great as the first game and backwards compatible, but needed to evolve more.

Sleeping Dogs
UNITED FRONT GAMES
Best-in-class combat and great presentation. You'll absolutely curse the vehicles, though.

Sniper Elite V2
REBELLION
A few rough edges here and there but the sniping is magnificent. Also, you can kill Hitler.

The Simpsons Arcade Game
KONAMI
One old-school 'classic' that we could do without. Not as cool you once thought.

SOCOM: Special Forces
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter.

Spec Ops: The Line
YAGER
Tries to depict the horrors of war but fails. Gets better just before the credits roll.

Starhawk
SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Addictive multi, more than competent splitscreen. Buy it.

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
This is a must-get for fans. Two steps forward and one step back from *War for Cybertron*.

Vanquish
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Velocity
FUTURLAB
A hypnotic racing-puzzler-shoot-'em-up and it's less than \$10. Challenging and stylish.

Wonderbook: Book of Spells
SONY
One part readalong, one part Move-wagglefest with a Hogwarts flavour.

Zone of the Enders HD Collection
KONAMI
Kojima's mechs-and-melodrama duo are all dolled up but still feels thin.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you.

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas with average platforming.

The Amazing Spider-Man 7
BEENOX
The best looking *Spider-Man* in a long time. Rips off *Arkham City* but lacks the depth.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed Revelations 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed III 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Looks better and is more ambitious than its predecessors with only a few niggles.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.



Batman: Arkham City 10
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1
"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

Blades of Time 4
GAINJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Simplistic combat, stupid AI, woeful levels.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play, though the RTS bits are a bit crap.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY STEAM
A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

Datura 6
SANTA MONICA STUDIOS
A proof-of-concept Move title that's little more than cobbled-together puzzles. Clunky.

RECOMMENDED Dead Island 8
TECHLAND
Bogus script and ugly but undeniably fun.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey*.

ESSENTIAL God of War III 10
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO/BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished the impact of these PS2 titles. A must-get.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection Volume II 8
READY AT DAWN
Meticulously updated and pretty to look at.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The scope and scale of GTA/V is remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and an explosive shotgun? Yes.

Hydrophobia: Prophecy 5
DARK ENERGY DIGITAL
Shoddy game, great water tech.

RECOMMENDED I Am Alive 9
UBISOFT
The game that was retail but now PSN only is dark, constantly tense and very satisfying.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 2 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
While its predecessor felt old this feels fresh.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
You'd have to be a fan to get this and 1-4.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
A joyous adaptation; one of the best.

NEW RECOMMENDED LEGO Lord of the Rings 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
A solid and rather large LEGO outing.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Great when it's on fire but the world feels empty. Has been well and truly bested.

RECOMMENDED Max Payne 3 8
ROCKSTAR
A riveting rollercoaster where each gunfight is a ballet of bullets. Superbly atmospheric.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane.

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection 9
KONAMI
MGS2 has aged, *Snake Eater* is still all class and *Peace Walker* rocks.

Ninja Gaiden 3 7
TEAM NINJA
Mind you don't impale yourself on the difficulty spike. Fans will lap it up.

RECOMMENDED Okami HD 8
CAPCOM
Got 40 hours spare? Get this. It's absolutely beautiful and has aged spectacularly well.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Harks back to the original Prince. You've been here before and the world's moved on.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9
INSONMIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8
INSONMIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Redemption 10
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
A sweeping epic. Grab the Game of the Year edition for maximum value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 4 8
CAPCOM
A straight port and not as pretty as it was, but it's still great.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 6 8
CAPCOM
Starts out slow and then ramps up. Worth buying for Mercenaries mode.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned 7
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two geniuses of design. A real shame.

Silent Hill: Downpour 7
VATRA GAMES
True to the pants-browning original, but technical problems and stupid AI tarnish it.

Silent Hill HD Collection 7
KONAMI
True evil never dies; it gets a decent facelift.

Sorcery 7
THE WORKSHOP
A genuinely fun Move title geared towards kids. Fun, lively tone with wink-wink writing.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception 10
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-12

"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teeth-gritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8
CS1 TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn 6
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
You'll get a kick out of co-op.

RECOMMENDED Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1 8
TELLTALE GAMES
Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks and feels amazing.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

Journey 9
THATGAMECOMPANY
Stunningly realised. A game unlike any other and perhaps the friendliest multiplayer.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation® Store



FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged. *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through cities may be old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



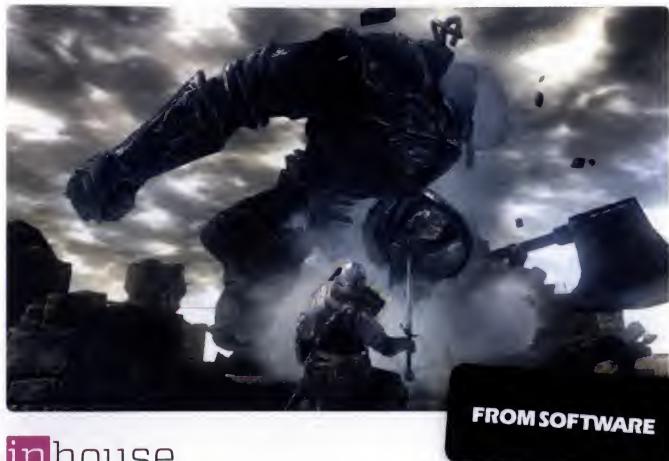
CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, this is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a *MGS* rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIÉVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

From Software

LOCATION: TOKYO, JAPAN FOUNDED: 1986

BEST KNOWN FOR: DARK SOULS

When Hidetaka Miyazaki first pitched the idea for *Demons Souls* to the company's marketing department, he stealthily decided not to talk much about the whole death thing. It's lucky for us he didn't because we could have ended up with a completely different game – one filled with save points and pause screens.

Most will probably only be familiar with the 'Souls' series but the studio has enjoyed a long history dating back almost 20 years. Founded in 1986 with a staff of four they originally developed business application software before venturing into video games development. Their first title *Kings Field* released in 1994 for the Playstation was also the first RPG to appear on the console.

The developer then went on to produce the *Armored Core* franchise and helped produce later iterations of the *Tenchi* series. With a library of roughly 50 games by 2009, the company had experienced success at home and to a lesser extent overseas.

When *Demons Souls* hit Japan and Asia in February that year there were no plans to localize it for a western audience. However a critical reception and numerous industry awards changed all that and the title ended up selling three times its initial sales projections.

The cult classic eventually made its way to Australian shores in June 2010.

Fast-forward to the present and From Software boasts 218 employees. Their latest RPG offering *Dark Souls* has sold over 1.3 million copies around the world and maintained almost universal critical acclaim. Not bad for a game that's almost completely at odds with current trends in gaming. Its ruthlessness was highlighted when players got their hands on the title before the official release date only to be annihilated by max level black phantoms in-game. The move was reportedly made in response to retailers breaking street date.

Creator Hidetaka Miyazaki believes the series success rests on the accomplishment it offers, something rare among the industry these days. As to the future of the studio Mr Takeuchi said they are considering making games for smart phones and tablets but they won't be 'watered down' experiences.

And finally what of the *Dark Souls* series? A trailer for *Dark Souls II* was shown at Spike's VGA awards in early December. Game director Tomohiro Shibuya said in an interview with Edge magazine "*Dark Souls I* will be more straightforward and more understandable."

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. Yes, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8
Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6
A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1
Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-Hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

ESSENTIAL L.A. Noire

TEAM BONDI

Slow-paced, incredibly detailed and well-executed. Unlike anything else available.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust

TEAM17 SOFTWARE

An amazing new low for this generation. Not even 'so bad it's good', it's just awful.

RECOMMENDED Stacking

DOUBLE FINE

A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler.

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

FROGWARES

Slow-paced and challenging, one for those who've always dreamt of being Holmes.

RECOMMENDED The Walking Dead - Episode 3

Telltale Games

Complex, and arguably the best episode yet. Only available on the US PSN. Sorry.

FIGHTING

NEW Anarchy Reigns

PLATINUM GAMES

Lots of potential, but it needs online players.

Dead or Alive 5

TEAM NINJA

A slick, beautiful mash of fighting polish and icky sleaze, but evolves into a frantic mess.

Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat

345 GAMES

Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure!

Dragon Ball Z Budokai HD Collection

DIMPS

Budokai 3 is a highlight but this is archaic.

Marvel vs Capcom: Origins

CAPCOM/IRON GALAXY STUDIOS

Two old titles in one outdated and boring package. Yawn.

RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat

NETHERREALM

A sterling, yet banned, return to form. Unless you live in NZ.

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

CYBERCONNECT 2

Stunning animation, but the biffo is a chore.

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

SUPERBOT ENTERTAINMENT

A reliable brawler but the lineup's lacking. It needed more big names – where's Snake, or Cloud?

RECOMMENDED Skullgirls

REVENGE LABS

Hand drawn characters and gorgeous animation. Wacky and weird but you'll love it.

RECOMMENDED SoulCalibur V

NAMCO BANDAI

Great weapons-based combat for online play, but single player is a bit thin. IV still rocks.

10

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter III - Third Strike Online Edition

9

IRON GALAXY

Very different from IV and utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter X Tekken

9

CAPCOM

Ridiculously entertaining and well-made, but the DLC strategy blows.

Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition

8

CAPCOM

For first time purchasers only. You'll probably find this or SSFIV on the cheap somewhere.

RECOMMENDED Tekken Tag Tournament 2

8

NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

Innovative and challenging. Tonnes of characters, including a few newbies.

RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

8

CAPCOM

Blinding action with a roster you deserve.

Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown

7

SEGA

Fast and clean, but the tasty extras are DLC.

WWE '13

6

YUKE'S/FUTURE MEDIA CREATORS

Comprehensively spoiled by sloppy controls. It hasn't improved much on last year, either.

FLIGHT

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

7

PROJECT ACES

Reality-bending fare that lacks depth.

Apache: Air Assault

7

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT

Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

RECOMMENDED Birds of Steel

8

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT

Hardcore stuff. The IL2 heritage shines through, but it's not as pretty as it once was.

Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII

3

MAD CATZ

A comprehensive failure. Unimaginative, glitchy, and it looks terrible.

ESSENTIAL IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey

10

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT

Packed with little details across the board.

Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters

5

TRICKSTAR GAMES

Fifth-rate design and presentation.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2

8

UBISOFT ROMANIA

Way better mission design over the first title and good variety too.

Top Gun: Hard Lock

4

HEADSTRONG GAMES

Limp and aimless. A trap laced with nostalgia that goes into a flat spin quickly.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack

HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff, but fully exportable.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band

HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2

FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and excellent mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band

HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero 5

NEVERSOFT
The last in the series with a dud tracklist.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica

NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock

NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it's missed the mark.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 4

UBISOFT
As much fun and just as silly as the last installment.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 4

UBISOFT
As silly and fun as the last instalment.

LEGO Rock Band

HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

PixelJunk 4am

Q GAMES
Move controls are poorly implemented. A pity.

RECOMMENDED Retro/Grade

24 CARET GAMES
A shooter-cum-rhythm game that's loaded with lasers.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3

HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

Rock Band Blitz

HARMONIX
Once again an extensive library will ensure you enjoy this.

RECOMMENDED Rocksmith

UBISOFT
More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

SingStar

SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

Ape Escape

JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

EyePet

SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider

JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes

NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

Sports Champions 2

ZINDAGI GAMES
The original was a must-have. This isn't.

Start the Party! Save the World!

SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
A Move game for the very young.

Yoostar 2

BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

Babel Rising

6

MANDO PRODUCTIONS
This tower-defence god-game has a spirited concept but winds up being soulless.

Essential Braid

10

HOTHEAD GAMES
Probably the best-ever example of how to implement time-bending physics.

RECOMMENDED Catherine

8

ATLUS
Niche and weird in places, but compelling.

RECOMMENDED Chime

8

ZOE MODE
A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

de Blob 2

9

BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist.

Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two

6

JUNCTION POINT STUDIOS
Way better with Move and with two players, but it's a bit tricky for young 'uns.

Flight Control

9

FIREMINT
One of the best Move games ever.

Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead

7

Rabbit
ARKEDO
A fun cartoon journey packed with blood.

Jak & Daxter Trilogy

9

SONY
PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen. A truly fine HD makeover.

Joe Danger 2

8

HELLO GAMES
A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

Katamari Forever

8

NAMCO BANDAI
Joyful, though the series is showing its age.

LittleBigPlanet 2

9

DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

A truly charming platformer.

Incredibly innovative and never-ending; you could sink a lifetime into creating anything you want for this and never be done."

NiGHTS into Dreams HD

6

SEGA (SHANGHAI) SOFTWARE
A game from yesterday riddled with cracks.

Outland

9

HOUSEMARQUE
Liberally copies bits from old-school

Castlevania but it does it well. Very clever.

Papo & Yo

7

MINORITY
Deep, affecting subject, but predictable and simple. Not cheap, either.

Pid

5

MIGHT & DELIGHT
Frustrating and not much fun at all. You will swear...a lot.

Quantum Conundrum

8

AIRTIGHT GAMES
If you're expecting more *Portal*, stop. Very cool ideas marred by frustrating platforming.

RECOMMENDED The Ratchet & Clank

9

TRILOGY
INSOMNIAC / IDOLMINDS
Excellent value for money and still refined.

Pac Manhattan

Played on the grid-like streets of New York city this urban game sees people dressed as ghosts chasing down somebody dressed as Pac-Man. All players out on the street are directed by players inside a control room via a controller and mobile phone. The game was developed as part of a New York University graduate program in order to learn what happens when video games are removed from the computer and played out in the real world. Makes you wonder how they'd tackle *Grand Theft Auto*.

RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins

8

UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous. Truly great with friends.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection

9

SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RECOMMENDED Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II

8

SEGA
Better than *Episode I* with tweaked physics. Also includes Tails, and he's actually useful.

Sonic Generations

7

SONIC TEAM
Starts out great and falters towards the end.

RECOMMENDED Sound Shapes

8

QUEASY GAMES
A music-based romp that embraces user generated content. On Vita, too. Very good.

The Unfinished Swan

7

GIANT SPARROW
Short, but beautiful and endearing. You'll need a Move controller, though.

RECOMMENDED Trine 2

8

FROZENBYTE
Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

When Vikings Attack

8

CLEVER BEANS
Fiendishly difficult but you'll love it for that.

Wizorb

7

TRIBUTE GAMES
A modern take on *Arkanoid* with magic and special powers. Dirt cheap. Great on Vita!

RACING/DRIVING

Blur

7

BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise

9

CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

RECOMMENDED Daytona USA

8

SEGA
Addictive as ever and beyond arcade-perfect.

RECOMMENDED DIRT 3

8

CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

DIRT Showdown

7

CODEMASTERS RACING
Flamboyance without substance and dumbed-down handling. Gymkhana rules.

RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco

9

REFLECTIONS
The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.

RECOMMENDED Dyad

8

I
A seizure-inducing, music-based blaster.

RECOMMENDED F1 2012

9

CODEMASTERS
Has more weird and toe-in-the-water moments. Weird flag rules, though.

F1 Race Stars

6

CODEMASTERS RACING
Frustrating kart racer. No drifting, either.

Gran Turismo 5

9

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet Karting

8

UNITED FRONT GAMES
Easier than *ModNation* but more loaded with opportunity to create. Lots of fun.

Mad Riders

7

TECHLAND
Cheap ATV thrills in a crowded market.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers

9

UNITED FRONT GAMES
Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotorGP 10/11

6

MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift

8

EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but feels old.

MotorStorm Apocalypses

8

EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive

5

RAINBOW STUDIOS
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

MUD - FIM Motocross World Championship

6

BLACK BEAN GAMES
No-frills motocross racing.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit

9

CRITERION GAMES
Smooth and truly beautiful arcade racing.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Most Wanted

8

CRITERION
A fantastic open-world racer that needs to be online. Great multiplayer too.

Nail'd

7

TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID

9

CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. A bit old, but the only other racer to have Mount Panorama.

Ridge Racer Unbounded

6

BUGBEAR ENTERTAINMENT
Woeful drifting, infuriating track design. Such a pity.

SBK Generations

7

MILESTONE
Fairly similar to 2011 and X. Technical and lovely but it's comparatively ugly.

RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Frantic racing with plenty of depth.

NEW Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed
SUMO DIGITAL
Tracks are great, the rest is okay. Pick Sonic.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Challenges *Burnout* but needed to be sharper.

NEW WRC 3
MILESTONE
Bordering on tolerable. Stick with 2 or *DiRT*.

Performance Wrecked: Revenge Revised
SUPERSONIC SOFTWARE
Absolute must-have for local-multi.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution.

RECOMMENDED Disgaea 4: A Promise
Unforgotten
NIPONICHI SOFTWARE
Very familiar for fans but still exciting.

RECOMMENDED Dark Souls
FROM SOFTWARE
Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders II
VIGIL GAMES
Slicker, tougher and deeper than the first.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II
BIOWARE
A step forward and two back from Origins.

RECOMMENDED Dragon's Dogma
CAPCOM
A challenging and punishing action-RPG where 'action' isn't an afterthought.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Book holidays; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers.

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2
SQUARE ENIX
Better; more freedom but still clunky in places.

Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2
IDEA FACTORY
A truly unnecessary sequel.

RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
38 STUDIOS/BIG HUG GAMES
A patchwork of everything that's great.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North 7
SNOWBALL STUDIOS
Repetitive combat. Best in co-op.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** Mass Effect 8
BIOWARE
Worth a purchase for its storytelling.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 3
BIOWARE
One-ups its impressive predecessor.

Mugen Souls
COMPILE HEART
An uninspired JRPG with a dirty sense of humour. Technically woeful, too.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** Ni No Kuni
LEVEL 5
Big, beautiful and addictive. Buy it.

Of Orcs and Men
CYANIDE
Unrefined but a bloody good effort compared to their *A Game of Thrones* cash-in.

The man who doesn't eat or drink



Basic videogame laws stipulate gaming characters don't have to eat or drink to survive. Try that in reality and you won't last a week. But 82 year old Prahlad Jani from India says he hasn't drunk fluids or eaten in 70 years. Doctors, in an effort to prove him wrong, locked Prahlad up in a glass room with CCTV cameras for 10 days and were astounded he emerged perfectly healthy, better than many half his age.

Performance Rainbow Moon 5
SIDEQUEST STUDIOS
Bland-as-batshit characters and dull combat.

Performance R.A.W. - Realms of Ancient War 4
WIZARDBOX
Rough and flavourless. Waves its fingers at RPG conventions and pays for it.

Risen 2 5
DEEP SILVER
A mess. Send it down to Davy Jones' Locker.

Tales of Graces f 7
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Saccharine, yet enticing. Looks lovely.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WOW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

Way of the Samurai 4 6
ACQUIRE
Wacky and weird. Japanophiles will dig it.

Yakuza: Dead Souls 8
SEGA
Sluggish and dated, like a zombie wearing flares.

SHOOTER

007 Legends 3
EUROCOM
An incomprehensibly awful Bond game and a really shoddy shooter in general.

Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield 3 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A deeply dedicated online community but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES/2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN/DIGITAL EXTREMES/2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.



10
RECOMMENDED Borderlands 2 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

"Wild, clever and overflowing with clever nodes and moments. More cohesive than its predecessor and addictive too, with loads of DLC you'll want to care about incoming. Rewards multiple playthroughs, especially in co-op."

7
Brink
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

RECOMMENDED Brother's in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

Bulletstorm 7
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but is best towards the end.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 9
INFINITY WARD
It realised the threat presented by *Battlefield 3* and sees it off. Refined and addictive.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops II 9
TREYARCH
Reinvents the multiplayer formula and has the best solo campaign out of all CoDs.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS/TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play.

Performance **RECOMMENDED** Counter-Strike: Global Offensive 8
VALVE
The game from your misspent youth.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 9
CRYTEK
Pretty, challenging and a welcome reprieve from corridor shooters. Tops the original.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness II 8
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Gory, inventive, and fun, but pretty short. You need to play co-op for the full story, too.

RECOMMENDED Deus Ex: Human Revolution 8
EIDOS MONTREAL
A flawed masterpiece that doesn't offer quite as much choice as you'd like.

RECOMMENDED Dishonored 8
ARKANE STUDIOS
Anti-climatic, otherwise a bloody good romp.

DOOM 3 BFG Edition 6
ID
It hasn't aged well. A relic with cobwebs.

NEW **Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse** 6
HEAVY IRON STUDIOS
Stay for the fanfare 'cos the game ain't good.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** Far Cry 3 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Absolutely the best in the series and a new benchmark for open world shooters.

F.E.A.R. 3
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary.

RECOMMENDED Ghost Recon: Future Soldier 8
UBISOFT PARIS
Another mil-sim but with beautiful tech and pacing. Brilliant, purchase-worthy, co-op.

NEW **Killzone HD**
GUERRILLA GAMES
Killzone before it was good. Easily missed.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 9
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline.

Medal of Honor: Warfighter
DANGER CLOSE
Old hat. Buggy solo, and lacklustre multi.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original and smartly designed.

Performance **RECOMMENDED** Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath 8
JUST ADD WATER
A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River 8
CODEMASTERS
Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK/VALVE
Get it for *Portal*, keep it for *Half-Life 2*.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2 9
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games, ever.

RAGE 7
ID
Holds promise but the world feels empty.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 3 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Derivative action but effortlessly compelling.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS/REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. The best bit is the end credits.

RECOMMENDED Syndicate 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stylish, and bountiful in co-op. Banned in Aus.

RECOMMENDED Twisted Metal 8
EAT SLEEP PLAY
Fast, refreshing and tactical. Great online.

SPORTS

AFL Live 6
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things – just.



FIFA 13 9
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"Inches closer and closer to the real thing. First Touch Controls are game- and genre-changing, and there's a very healthy and complex online component too."

RECOMMENDED FIFA Street 6
EA CANADA
Attacking feels good but defending will make you cry. Needs more fun in the next update.

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion 9
EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

London 2012 6
SEGA STUDIOS AUSTRALIA
Waggle- and mash-tacular! Better in multi.

RECOMMENDED Madden NFL 13 8
EA TIBURON
Dodgy physics aside, this is the best the series has been.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K13 9
VISUAL CONCEPTS
One of NBA's finest moments yet.

Performance **RECOMMENDED** NBA Jam: On Fire Edition 8
EA CANADA
Edition
Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it.

RECOMMENDED Pro Evolution Soccer 2013 8
KONAMI
Does lots of things differently to *FIFA* and it's doing them bloody well.

Rugby League Live 2 6
BIG ANT STUDIOS
Fixes some of *Live's* problems but it feels crude. For die-hards only.

RECOMMENDED <i>Skate 3</i>	8
EA BLACK BOX	
Better in many ways, though we'd stick with the madness of <i>Skate 2</i> .	
SSX	7
EA CANADA	
Labyrinthine courses mean plenty to do, but you might get lost on the way.	
<i>Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13</i>	7
EA TIBURON	
Great golf game but you'll always need to be online to truly progress. Got 12? Stick with it.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD</i>	6
ROBOMODO	
Skimpy. Lacks content and no splitscreen.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Top Spin 4</i>	8
2K CZECH	
Still the best tennis sim with a DualShock.	
RECOMMENDED <i>UFC Undisputed 3</i>	9
YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS	
If you 'get' the sport you need this.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Virtua Tennis 4</i>	8
SUMO DIGITAL	
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.	

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED <i>Anomaly Warzone Earth</i>	8
11BIT STUDIOS	
Tower offence and it's excellent. Also, co-op.	
Awesomenauts	7
RONIMO GAMES	
There's no such thing as a quick game in this MOBA. A real slog at times.	
RECOMMENDED <i>From Dust</i>	9
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER	
Creative and engaging god-game.	
Worms Revolution	7
TEAM 17	
Genuine new ideas but feels a little muddled.	
RECOMMENDED <i>XCOM: Enemy Unknown</i>	8
PIRAKIS GAMES	
Fantastic concept and very engrossing.	

PS VITA

NEW RECOMMENDED <i>Alien Breed</i>	6
TEAM 17	
Later levels get better but it's not enough.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Assassin's Creed III Liberation</i>	9
UBISOFT SOFIA	
A must play, and a system seller.	
NEW <i>Call of Duty: Black Ops Declassified</i>	4
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE	
Verbally bash this trash as much as you like.	
NEW Chronovolt	6
PLAYERTHREE	
Camera issues make a stressful <i>Monkey Ball</i> .	
RECOMMENDED <i>Floating Cloud God Saves the Pilgrims</i>	8
DAKKO DAKKO	
A thoroughly charming sidescrolling shooter.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Everybody's Golf</i>	8
CLAP HANZ	
Excellent physics. Even though it's puke-worthy cute, you won't be disappointed.	
RECOMMENDED <i>FIFA Football</i>	9
EA	
<i>FIFA 12</i> , tweaked, and in your hands. Superb.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Gravity Rush</i>	9
JAPAN STUDIO	
Stylish free-roaming action RPG.	
NEW <i>LEGO Lord of the Rings</i>	6
TRAVELER'S TALES	
A poor port with age-old combat mechanics.	
LittleBigPlanet PS Vita	7
DOUBLE ELEVEN	
It's <i>LBP</i> as you know it (good!), but the touchscreen stuff gets in the way (bad!).	

RECOMMENDED <i>Lumines: Electronic Symphony</i>	8
Q ENTERTAINMENT	
Hypnotic and addictive music-based puzzler with new twists. Must get.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Metal Gear Solid HD Collection</i>	8
KONAMI/ BLUEPOINT GAMES	
A so-so port of excellent games.	
Modnation Racers: Road Trip	7
SONY SAN DIEGO	
Much to do and create but no online multi.	

RECOMMENDED <i>Mortal Kombat</i>	8
NETHERREALM	
NZ only, which is a shame because like the PS3 version it's guilty, bloody, fun.	
RECOMMENDED <i>MotorStorm RC</i>	8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS	
Holy hamburgers, this is addictive stuff.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Need For Speed Most Wanted</i>	8
EA	
Very similar to its big brother. The best racer on PS Vita by far.	
NEW <i>New Little King's Story</i>	6
MINDSCAPE	
Lacking polish, but not technical issues.	

NEW <i>Playstation All-Stars Battle Royale</i>	7
BLUEPOINT GAMES	
Everything its console counterpart is. It's free if you already own it on PS3.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Rayman Origins</i>	8
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER	
Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.	
<i>Shinobido 2: Revenge of Zen</i>	6
ACQUIRE	
Technical issues and a weird camera system tarnishes a cool action game.	
NEW <i>Silent Hill: Book of Memories</i>	7
WAYFARROW TECHNOLOGIES	
<i>Diablo</i> meets <i>Silent Hill</i> . Ok, but strange.	
NEW <i>Sixty Second Shooter Deluxe</i>	7
HAPPION LABORATORIES	
Twin stick blaster for the time poor.	

NEW <i>Smart As</i>	6
XDEV	
An ordinary by-the-books brain trainer.	
NEW <i>Spy Hunter</i>	5
TT FUSION	
Ok car combat with a forgettable campaign.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Street Fighter X Tekken</i>	9
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS	
A perfect rendition of the PS3 version.	

Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	7
AMUSEMENT VISION	
A solid entry that harkens back to its brutal beginnings.	

RECOMMENDED <i>Super Stardust Delta</i>	9
HOUSEMARQUE	
Cheap. Fun. Ridiculously pretty. Must get.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack!</i>	8
DRINKBOX STUDIOS	
A really clever platformer.	

Touch My Katamari	5
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS	
Disappointing. Bereft of the usual charm.	
RECOMMENDED <i>Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3</i>	9
CAPCOM	
Accessible to everyone and very pretty.	

Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour	8
SEGA	
It's the PS3 game, but on Vita, which is really quite good. Only worth buying once, though.	
RECOMMENDED <i>WipEout 2048</i>	8
STUDIO LIVERPOOL	
A very pretty robust racer; true to the series.	

RECOMMENDED <i>Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward</i>	8
SPIKE CHUNSOFT	
A sort of choose your own adventure that's superbly written.	

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS
2006
Black

CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: SHOOTER DEVELOPER: CRITERION GAMES COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK CURRENT PRICE: \$10 (EBAY)



Dear anybody who played *Black* back on PS2 and thought it was the bomb: ignorance is bliss, do not attempt to replay it. *Black* was Criterion's first – and last – foray into first-person shooting for damn good reasons.

We'll get to the gameplay issues in a minute; because easily the biggest problem of *Black* lies in its stupidly verbose, "try-hardcore" live action cutscenes. Imagine, if you will, a debriefing in a dark room that focuses on the nonsensical, army-speak of a military official and a generic, chain-smoking protagonist. While they're blah-blahing about uninteresting crap, you'll never see much more than their chins, or the tops of their heads through a spinning ceiling fan. Incidentally after 10 minutes you'll want your digital self to whip out his belt and hang himself on said fan – he's that engaging and likeable.

Now imagine that these three to four minute cutscenes are sandwiched between 10 minute-long levels and are completely and utterly unskippable. Pity the fool who has no memory card, too. Every single time *Black* boots up it forces anybody without a save file to watch – no shit – three minutes of credits (white text on a black background) before the title screen arrives. Press start there and you'll need to watch two more minutes of chins and fans before gameplay begins. If Criterion was trying to get meta by making us feel as held against or will and needlessly punished as our on-screen hero, mission f-king accomplished.

When you do finally get to shoot somebody in *Black* it gets a whole lot better. Criterion takes you on a hip-firing duck shoot through environments that, amusingly, are less linear than most modern *Call of Duty* titles. Finite health and stupid AI hordes mean survival isn't determined on your trigger finger so much as it is knowing how many bullets you can eat before you have to tap down on the d-pad to use a med kit.

The standout feature of *Black* has got to be the pornographic presentation of its sweet, sweet arsenal. The firearm models, expended bullet casings, smoke wafts and reload animations are enough to give any gun-nut a big ol' Texan erection. Problem is, Criterion, or perhaps the protagonist, is far too enamored with these boomsticks. Every reload causes a shitty depth of field effect that puts focus on the gun and turns the battlefield beyond into a blur. Also, for all the painstaking effort used on recreating these weapons, nobody gave a single crap about making them handle realistically. Case in point: you can blow up a car (by shooting its windows) using one shotgun shell fired from half a street away.

At the end of the day *Black* was full of itself, a near textbook exercise in style over substance. It is, however, a damn sight better than its spiritual successor, 2006's *Bodycount*, which had a more balanced ratio of zero style and zero substance. If EA did ever try to dig *Black* back up as a HD remake we'd recommend all veterans disavow all previous knowledge of it. Some files deserve to remain sealed. Or lost.

Adam Mathew

STORY? WHAT STORY?

So, what the hell is the story in *Black*? You're Sgt. Keller, a Black Ops who has just failed his operation – badly. During an interrogation to reveal his mission (cue: you replaying eight of said events) his superiors hope to find out how, exactly, he screwed the pooch. Spoiler: doggy style. Interestingly, *Black* was not developed with an overarching plot structure in mind. This was implemented as something of an afterthought towards the end of development. Wow.



Next month

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